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THE WORKS OF
STANLEY J. WEYMAN

VOL. XVII

STARVECROW FARM

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(Author's Complete Edition)

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STARVECROW FARM

BY

STANLEY J. WEYMAN

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STARVECROW FARM

CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE QUICKSANDS

A HEAD appeared at either window of the postchaise. Henrietta looked forward. Her lover looked back The postchaise had nearly cleared the sands. Behind it : low line of Lancashire coast was fading from sight. Be-ee it the long green hill of Cartmel had risen so high and wn so near as to hide the Furness fells. On the left, sea-rd, a waste of sullen shallows and quaking sands still etched to infinity—a thing to shudder at. But the savage ad of Warton Crag, that for a full hour had guarded the vellers' right, had given place to the gentler outlines of mside Knot. The dreaded Lancashire Channels had been ssed in safety, and the mounted guide, whose task it was lead wayfarers over these syrtes, and who enjoyed as erdon the life-rent of a snug farm under Cark, no longer ed the west with anxiety, but plashed in stolid silence wards his evening meal.

And all was well. But the margin of safety had not been ge—the postboys' boots still dripped, and the floor of the rriage was damp. Seaward the pale line of the tide, which uld presently sweep in one foaming wave across the flat, H in an instant cover it half a foot deep, was fretting abreast the point. Ten minutes later had been too late; and the of Henrietta's lover, whom a few hours and a Scotch ister were to make her husband, betrayed his knowledge the fact. He looked backward and westward over the

dreary flat; and fascinated, seized, possessed by the scene, he shuddered—perhaps at his own thoughts. He would fain have bidden the postboys hasten, but he was ashamed to give the order before her. Halfway across he had set down the uneasiness he could not hide to the fear of pursuit, to the fear of separation. But he could no longer do this; for it was plain to a child that neither horse nor man would cross Cartmel sands until the tide that was beginning to run had ebbed again.

And Henrietta looked forward. The dull grey line of coast, quickly passing into the invisible, on which she turned her back, stood for her past; the sun-kissed peaks and blue distances of Furness, which her fancy still mirrored, though the Cartmel shore now hid them, stood for the future. To those heights, beautified by haze and distance, her heart went out, finding in them the true image of the coming life, the true foretype of those joys, tender and mysterious, to which she was hastening. The past, which she was abandoning, she knew: a cold home in the house of an unfeeling sister-in-law and a brother who when he was not hunting was tipsy—that, and the prospect of an unlovely marriage with a man who—horror!—had had one wife already, stood for the past. The future she did not know; but hope painted it from her brightest palette, and the girl's eyes filled, her lips quivered, her heart strained towards the sympathy and love that were henceforth to be hers—towards the happiness which she had set out to seek, and that now for certain could not escape her. As the postchaise lumbered heavily up the rough-paved groyne that led from the sands she shook from head to foot. At last her feet were set upon the land beautiful. And save for the compact which her self-respect had imposed upon her companion, she must have given way, she must have opened all her heart, thrown herself upon his breast and wept tears of tender anticipation.

She controlled herself. As it happened, they drew in their heads at the same time, and his eyes—they were handsome eyes—met hers.

"Dearest!" he said.

"We are safe now?"

"Safe from pursuit. But I am not safe."

"Not safe?"

"From your cruelty."

His voice was velvet; and he sought to take her hand.

But she withheld it.

"No, sir," she said, though her look was tender. "Remember our compact. You are quite sure that they will pursue us along the great road?"

"Yes, as far as Kendal. There they will learn that we are not before them—that we have somewhere turned aside. And they will turn back."

"But suppose that they drive on to Carlisle—where we rejoin the north road."

"They will not," he replied confidently. He had regained the grand air which he had lost while the terror of the sands was upon him. "And if you fear that," he continued, there is the other plan, and I think the better one. To-morrow at noon the packet leaves Whitehaven for Scotland. The wind is fair, and by six in the afternoon we may be ashore, and an hour later you will be mine!" And again he sought to draw her into his arms.

But she repelled him.

"In either case," she said, her brow slightly puckered, we must halt to-night at the inn of which you spoke."

"The inn on Windermere—yes. And we can decide there, sweet, whether we go by land or sea; whether we will rejoin the north road at Carlisle or cross from Whitehaven to"—he hesitated an instant—"to Dumfries."

She was romantic to the pitch of a day which valued sensibility more highly than sense, and which had begun to read the poetry of Byron without ceasing to read the "Mysteries of Udolpho"; and she was courageous to the point of folly. Even now laughter gleamed under her long lashes, and the bubblings of irresponsible youth were never very far from her lips. Still, with much folly, with vast recklessness and an infinitude of ignorance, she was still no fool—though a hundred times a day she said foolish things. In the present

circumstances respect for herself rather than distrust of her lover taught her that she stood on slippery ways and instilled a measure of sobriety.

"At the inn," she said, "you will put me in charge of the landlady." And looking through the window, she carolled a verse of a song as irrelevant as snow in summer.

"But——" he paused.

"There is a landlady, I suppose?"

"Yes, but——"

"You will do what I say to-day," she replied firmly—and now the fine curves of her lips were pressed together, and she hummed no more—"if you wish me to obey you to-morrow."

"Dearest, you know——"

But she cut him short.

"Please to say that it shall be so," she said.

He swore that he would obey her then and always. And bursting again into song as the carriage climbed the hill, she flung from her the mood that had for a moment possessed her, and was a child again. She made gay faces at him, each more tantalising than the other; gave him look for look, each more tender than the other; and with the tips of her dainty fingers blew him kisses in exchange for his. Her helmet-shaped bonnet, with its huge plume of feathers, lay in her lap. The heavy coils of her fair, almost flaxen, hair were given to view, and under the fire of his flatteries the delicacy of colouring—for pallor it could scarcely be called—which so often accompanies very light hair, and was the sole defect of her beauty, gave place to blushes that fired his blood.

But he knew something of her spirit. He knew that she had it in her to turn back even now. He knew that he might cajole, but could never browbeat her. And he restrained himself the more easily, as, in spite of the passion and eloquence—some called it vapouring—which made him a hero where thousands listened, he gave her credit for the stronger nature. He held her childishness, her frivolity, her *naïveté*, in contempt. Yet he could not shake off his fear of what she might do—when she knew.

They paid off the guide under the walls of the old priory

hurch at Cartmel, with the children of the village crowding bout the doors of the chaise; then with a fresh team they tarted up the valley that leads to the foot of Windermere ake. But now the November day was beginning to draw .. The fell on their right took gloomier shape; on their ft a brook sopped its way through rush-covered fields; and ere and there the leafless limbs of trees pointed to the grey. nd first one and then the other, with the shrill cries of moor-rds in their ears, and the fading landscape before their eyes, ll silent. Then, had they been as other lovers, had she stood ore safely, or he been single-hearted, he had taken her in is arms and held her close, and comforted her, and the dusk ithin had been but the frame and set-off to their love.

But as it was he feared to make overtures, and they sat ach in a corner, until, in sheer dread of the effect which re-ection might have on her, he asked her if she feared pursuit; dding, "Depend upon it, darling, you need not; Sir Charles ill not give a thought to this road."

She drummed thoughtfully with her fingers on the pane.

"I am not afraid of my brother," she said.

"Then of whom?"

"Of Anthony," she answered, and corrected herself hur-iedly—"of Captain Clyne, I mean. He will think of this oad."

"But he will not have had the news before noon," Stewart nswered. "It is eighteen miles from your brother's to the)ld Hall. And besides, I thought that he did not love you."

"He does not," she rejoined, "but he loves himself. He oves his pride. And this will hit both—hard! I am not uite sure," she continued very slowly and thoughtfully, ' that I am not a little sorry for him. He made so certain, ou see. He thought all arranged. A week to-day was the lay fixed, and—yes"—impetuously—"I am sorry for him hough I hated him yesterday!"

Stewart was silent a moment.

"I hate him to-day," he said.

"Why?"

His eyes sparkled.

"I hate all his kind," he said. "They are hard as stones, stiff as oaks, cruel as—as their own laws! A man is no man to them, unless he is of"—he paused almost imperceptibly—"our class! A law is no law to them unless they administer it! They see men die of starvation at their gates, but all is right, all is just, all is for the best, as long as they govern!"

"I don't think you know him," she said, something stiffly.

"Oh, I know him."

"But——"

"Oh, I know him!" he repeated, the faint note of protest in her voice serving to excite him. "He was at Manchester. There were a hundred thousand men out of work—starving, seeing their wives starve, seeing their children starve. And they came to Manchester and met. And he was there, and he was one of those who signed the order for the soldiers to ride them down—men, women, and children, without arms, and packed so closely that they could not flee!"

"Well," she said pertly, "you would not have us all murdered in our beds?"

He opened his mouth, and he shut it again. He knew that he had been a fool. He knew that he had gone near to betraying himself. She was nineteen, and thoughtless; she had been bred in the class he hated; she had never heard any political doctrines save those which that class, the governing class, held; and though twice or thrice he had essayed faintly to imbue her with his notions of liberty and equality and fraternity, and had pictured her with the red cap of freedom perched on her flaxen head, the only liberty in which he had been able to interest her had been her own!

By-and-by, in different conditions, she might be more amenable, should he then think it worth while to convert her. For the present his eloquence was stayed in midstream. Yet he could not be altogether silent, for he was a man to whom words were very dear.

"Well," he said in a lower tone, "there is something in that, sweet. But I know worse of him than that. You may think it right to transport a man for seven years for poaching a hare——"

"They should not poach," she said lightly, "and they could not be transported!"

"But you will think differently of flogging a man to death!"

Her face flushed.

"I don't believe it!" she cried.

"On his ship in Plymouth Harbour they will tell you differently."

"I don't believe it!" she replied, with passion. And then, "How horrid you are!" she continued. "And it is nearly dark! Why do you talk of such things? You are jealous of him—that is what you are!"

He saw the wisdom of sliding back into their old relations, and he seized the opportunity her words offered.

"Yes," he murmured, "I am jealous of him. And why not? I am jealous of the wind that caresses your cheek, of the carpet that feels your tread, of the star that peeps in at your window! I am jealous of all who come near you, or speak to you, or look at you!"

"Are you really?"—in a tone of childish delight. "As jealous as that?"

He swore it with many phrases.

"And you will be so always?" she sighed softly, leaning towards him. "Always—Alan?"

"To eternity!" he answered. And emboldened by her melting mood, he would have taken her hand, and perhaps more than her hand, but at that moment the lights of the inn at Newby Bridge flashed on them suddenly, the roar of the water as it rushed over the weirs surprised their ears, the postboys cracked their whips, and the carriage bounded and rattled over the steep pitch of the bridge. A second or two later it came to a stand before the inn amid a crowd of helpers and stable lads, whose lanthorns dazzled the travellers' eyes.

They stayed only to change horses, then were away again. But the halt sufficed to cool his courage; and as they pounded on monotonously through the night, the darkness and the dim distances of river and lake—for they were approaching the shores of Windermere—produced their natural effect on Henrietta's feelings. She had been travelling since early

morning cooped and cramped within the narrow chaise ; she had spent the previous night in a fever of suspense and restlessness. Now, though slowly, the gloom, the dark forms of the woods, and that sense of loneliness which seizes upon all who are flung for the first time among strange surroundings, began to tell upon the spirits even of nineteen. She did not admit the fact to herself—she would have died before she confessed it to another ; but disillusion had begun its subtle task.

Here were all the things for which she had panted—the dear, delightful things of which she had dreamed : the whirl of the postchaise through the night, the crack of the whips, the cries of the postboys, the lighted inns, the dripping woods, the fear of pursuit, the presence of her lover ! And already they were growing flat. Already the savour was escaping from them. There were tears in her heart, tears very near her eyes.

He could have taken her hand then, and more than her hand. For suddenly she recognised, with a feeling nearer terror than her flighty nature had ever experienced before, her complete dependence on him. Henceforth love, comfort, kindness, companionship—all must come from him. She had flung from her every stay but his, every hand but his. He was become her all, her world. And could she trust him ? Not only with her honour—she never dreamed of doubting that—but could she trust him afterwards ? To be kind to her, to be good to her, to be generous to her ? Thoughtless, inexperienced, giddy as she was, Henrietta trembled. A pitiful sob rose in her throat. It needed but a little, a very little, and she had cast herself in abandonment on her lover's breast, and there wept out her fears and her doubts.

But he had also his anxieties, and he let the moment pass by him unmarked. He had reasons, other and more urgent than those he had given her, for taking this road and for staying the night in a place whence Whitehaven and Carlisle were equally accessible ; and those reasons had seemed good enough in the day when the fear of pursuit had swayed him. They seemed less pertinent now. He began to wish that he

had taken another road, pursued another course. And he was deep in a brown study, in which love had no part, when an exclamation, at once of surprise and admiration, recalled him to the present.

They had topped a bare shoulder and come suddenly in sight of Lake Windermere. The moon had not long risen above the hills on their right, the water lay on their left ; below them stretched a long pale mirror, whose borrowed light, passing over the dark woods which framed it, faintly lit and explored the stupendous fells and mountains that rose beyond. To Stewart it was no unfamiliar or noteworthy sight ; and his eyes, after a passing glance of approval, turned to the road below them and marked with secret anxiety the spot where two or three lights indicated their halting-place.

But to Henrietta the sight, as unexpected as it was beautiful, appealed in a manner never to be forgotten. She held her breath, and slowly her eyes filled. Half subdued by fatigue and darkness, half awake to the dangers and possibilities of her situation, she was in the mood most fit to be moved by the tender melancholy of the scene. She was feeling a craving for something—for something to comfort her, for something to reassure her, for something on which to lean in the absence of all the common things of life : and there broke on her the mystic beauty of this moonlit lake, and it melted her. Her heart, hitherto untouched, awoke. The compact which she had made with her lover stood for naught. The tears running down her face, she turned to him, she held out her hands to him.

" Kiss me ! " she murmured. " And say—say you will be good to me ! I have only you now ! Only you—only you ! "

He caught her in his arms and kissed her rapturously ; and the embrace was ardent enough to send the scarlet surging to her temples, to set her heart throbbing. But the chaise was in the very act of drawing up at the door of the inn ; and it may be doubted if he tasted the full sweetness of the occasion. A face looked in at the carriage window, on the side farther from the lake appeared a bowing landlord, a voice inquired, " Horses on ? " The postchaise stopped.

CHAPTER II

A RED WAISTCOAT

CHEERFUL lights, beaming from the open doorway and the red-curtained windows of the inn, shone on the road immediately before it; and if these and the change in all the surroundings did not at once dispel the loneliness at Henrietta's heart, at least they drove the tears from her eyes and the blushes from her cheeks. The cold moonlight, the unchanging face of nature, had sobered and frightened her; the warmth of fire and candle, the sound of voices, and the low, homely front of the house, with its two projecting gables, reassured her. The forlorn child who had flung herself into her lover's arms not forty seconds before was not to be recognised in the girl who alighted slowly and with gay self-possession, took in the scene at a glance, and won the hearts of ostler and stable boy by her ease and her fresh young beauty. She was bare-headed, and her high-dressed hair, a little disordered by the journey, gleamed in the lanthorn-light. Her eyes were like stars. The landlord of the inn—known for twenty miles round as "Long Tom Gilson"—saw at a glance that the missus's tongue would run on her. He wished that he might not be credited with his hundred-and-thirty-first conquest!

The thought, however, did not stand between him and his duty. "Sharp, Sam," he cried briskly. "Fire in Mr. Rogers's room." Then to his guests: "Late? No, sir, not at all. This way, ma'am. All will be ready in a twinkling."

But Henrietta stood smiling.

"Thank you," she answered pleasantly, her clear young voice slightly raised. "But I wished to be placed in the landlady's charge. Is she here?"

Gilson turned towards the doorway, which his wife's portly form fitted pretty tightly.

"Here, missus," he cried, "the young lady wants you."

But Mrs. Gilson was a woman who was not wont to be hurried, and before she reached the side of the carriage Stewart interposed, more roughly and more hurriedly than seemed discreet in the circumstances.

"Let us go in, and settle that afterwards," he said

"No."

"Yes!" he retorted. And he grasped the girl's arm tightly. His voice was low, but insistent. "Let us go in."

But the girl only vouchsafed him a look, half wondering, half indignant. She turned to the landlady.

"I am tired, and need no supper," she said. "Will you take me into a room, if you please, where I can rest at once, as we go on early to-morrow?"

"Certainly," the landlady answered. She was a burly, red-faced, heavy-browed woman. "But you have come some way, ma'am. Will you not take supper with the gentleman?"

"No."

He interposed.

"At least let us go in!" he repeated pettishly. And there was an agitation in his tone and manner not easy to explain, except on the supposition that in some way she had thwarted him. "We do not want to spend the night on the road, I suppose?"

She did not reply. But none the less, as she followed Mrs. Gilson to the door, was she wondering what ailed him. She was unsuspicious by nature, and she would not entertain the thought that he wished her to act otherwise than she was acting. What was it then? Save for a burly man in a red waistcoat, who stood in a lighted doorway farther along the front of the inn, and seemed to be watching their movements with lazy interest, there were only the people of the inn present. And the red-waistcoated man could hardly be in pursuit of them, for, for certain, he was a stranger. Then what was it?

She might have turned and asked her lover; but she was offended and she would not stoop. And before she thought better of it—or worse—she had crossed the threshold. A warmer air, an odour of spices and lemons and old rum, met her. On the left of the low-browed passage a half-open door offered a glimpse of shining glass and ruddy firelight; there was Mrs. Gilson's snuggery, sometimes called the coach office. On the right a room with a long table spoke of coaching meals and a groaning board. From beyond these, from the penetralia of kitchen and pantry, came faint indications of plenty and the spit.

A chambermaid was waiting at the foot of the narrow staircase to go before them with lights; but the landlady took the candles herself, and dismissed the woman with a single turn of the eye. A habit of obedience to Mrs. Gilson was the one habit of the inn, the one common ground on which all, from Tom Gilson to the smallest strapper in the stable, came together.

The landlady went ponderously up before her guest and opened the door of a dimity-hung chamber. It was small and simple, but of the cleanest. Hid in it were rosemary and lavender, and the leafless branches of a rose-tree whipped the diamond panes of the low, broad window. Mrs. Gilson lighted the two wax candles—"waxes" in those days formed part of every bill but the bagman's. Then she turned and looked at the girl with deliberate disapproval.

"You will take nothing, ma'am, to eat?" she said.

"No, thank you," Henrietta answered. And then, resenting the woman's look, "I may as well tell you," she continued, holding her head high, "that we have eloped, and are going to be married to-morrow. That is why I wished to be put in your charge."

The landlady, with her great face frowning, continued to look at the girl, and for a moment did not answer.

At length, "You mean you've run away," she said, "from your friends?"

Henrietta nodded loftily.

"From a distance, I take it?"

"Yes."

"Well," Mrs. Gilson rejoined, her face continuing to express growing disapproval, "there's a stock of fools near and far. And if I did my duty, young lady, there'd be one who would likely be thankful all her life." She took the snuffers and slowly and carefully snuffed the two candles. "If I did my duty, I'd lock you up and keep you safe till your friends came for you."

"You are insolent!" the girl cried, flaming up.

"That depends," Mrs. Gilson retorted, with the utmost coolness. "Fine feathers make fine birds. You may be my lady, or my lady's maid. Men are such fools—all's of the best that's red and white. But I'm not so easy."

Henrietta raised her chin a little higher.

"Be good enough to leave the room!" she said.

But the stout woman held her ground.

"Not before I've said what I have to say," she answered. "It is one thing, and one thing only, hinders me doing what I ought to do, and what if you were my girl I'd wish another to do. And that is—your friends may not want you back. And then, to be married to-morrow is like enough the best you can do for yourself! And the sooner the better!"

Henrietta's face turned scarlet, and she stamped on the floor.

"You are a wicked, insolent woman!" she said. "You do not know your place, nor mine. How dare you say such things to me? How dare you? Did you hear me bid you leave the room?"

"Hoity-toity!"

"Yes, at once."

"Very good," Mrs. Gilson replied ponderously—"very good! But you may find worse friends than me. And maybe one of them is downstairs now."

"You hateful woman!" the girl cried; and had a glimpse of the landlady's red, frowning face as the woman turned for a last look in the doorway. Then the door closed, and she was left alone—alone with her thoughts.

Her face burned, her neck tingled. She was very, very

angry, and a little frightened. This was a scene in her elopement which anticipation had not pictured. It humiliated her—and scared her. To-morrow, no doubt, all would be well; all would be cheerfulness, tenderness, sunshine; all would be on the right basis. But in the meantime the sense of forlornness which had attacked her in the chaise returned on her as her anger cooled, and with renewed strength. Her world, the world of her whole life up to daybreak of this day, was gone for ever. In its place she had only this bare room with its small-paned casement and its dimity hangings and its clean scent. Of course *he* was below, and he was the world to her, and would make up a hundredfold what she had resigned for him. But he was below, he was absent; and meantime her ear and her heart ached for a tender word, a kind voice, a look of love. At least, she thought, he might have come under her window, and whistled the air that had been the dear signal for their meetings. Or he might have stood a while and chatted with her, and shown her that he was not offended. The severest prude, even that dreadful woman who had insulted her, could not object to that!

But he did not come. Of course he was supping—what things men were! And then, out of sheer loneliness, her eyes filled, and her thoughts of him grew tender and more humble. She dwelt on him no longer as her conquest, her admirer, the prize of her bow and spear, subject to her lightest whim and her most foolish caprice; but as her all, the one to whom she must cling, and on whom she must depend. In a word, she thought of him as for a brief while she had thought of him in the chaise. And she wondered with a chill of fear if she would be left after marriage as she was left now. She had heard of such things, but in the pride of her beauty, and his subjection, she had not thought that they could happen to her. Now—— But instead of dwelling on a possibility which frightened her, she vowed to be very good to him—good and tender and loyal, and a true wife. They were resolutions that a trifling temptation, an hour's neglect or a cross word, might have overcome. But they were honest, they were sincere, they were made in the soberest moment that her

young life had ever known; and they marked a step in development, a point in that progress from girlhood to womanhood which so few hours might see complete.

Meanwhile Mrs. Gilson had returned to her snuggery, wearing a face that, had the lemons and other comforts about her included cream, must have turned it sour. That snuggery, it may be, still exists in the older part of the Low Wood Inn. In that event it should have a value. For to it Mr. Samuel Rogers, the rich London banker, would sometimes condescend from his apartments in the south gable; and with him Mr. Kirkpatrick Sharp, a particular gentleman who sniffed a little at the rum; or Sir James Mackintosh, who, rumour had it, enjoyed some reputation in London as a writer. At times, too, Mr. Southey, Poet Laureate elsewhere, but here Squire of Greta Hall, would stop on his way to visit his neighbour at Storrs—no such shorthorns in the world as Mr. Bolton's at Storrs; and not seldom he brought with him a London gentleman, Mr. Brougham, whose vanity in opposing the Lowther interest at the late election had almost petrified Mrs. Gilson. Mr. Brougham called himself a Whig, but Mrs. Gilson held him little better than a Radical—a kind of cattle seldom seen in those days outside the dock of an assize court. Or sometimes the visitor was that queer, half-moithered Mr. Wordsworth at Rydal; or Mr. Wilson of Elleray with his great voice and his homespun jacket. He had a sort of name too; but if he did anything better than he fished, the head ostler was a Dutchman!

The visits of these great people, however—not that Mrs. Gilson blenched before them, she blenched before nobody short of Lord Lonsdale—had place in the summer. To-night the landlady's sanctum, instead of its complement of favourite guests gathered to stare at Mr. Southey's last order for "Horses on!" boasted but a single tenant. Even he sat where the landlady did not at once see him; and it was not until she had cast a log on the dogs with a violence which betrayed her feelings that he announced his presence by a cough.

"There's the sign of a good house," he said with approval.

"Never unprepared!—never unprepared! Come late, come early—coach, chaise, or gig—it is all one to a good house."

"Umph!"

"It is a pleasure to sit by"—he waved his pipe with unction—"and to see a thing done properly!"

"Ay, it's a pleasure to many to sit by," the landlady answered with withering sarcasm. "It's an easy way of making a living—especially when you are waiting for what doesn't come. Put a red waistcoat on old Sam the postboy, and he'd sit by and see as well as another!"

The man in the red waistcoat chuckled.

"I'm glad they don't take you into council at Bow Street, ma'am!" he said.

"They might do worse."

"They might do better," he rejoined. "They might take you into the force! I warrant"—with a look of respectful admiration—"if they did there's little would escape you. Now that young lady?" He indicated the upper regions with his pipe. "Postboys say she came from Lancaster. But from where before that?"

"Wherever she's from, she did not tell me!" Mrs. Gilson snapped.

"Ah!"

"And what is more, if she had, I shouldn't tell you."

"Oh, come, come, ma'am!" Mr. Bishop was mildly shocked. "Oh, come, ma'am! That is not like you. Think of the King and his royal prerogative!"

"Fiddlesticks!"

Mr. Bishop looked quite staggered.

"You don't mean it," he said—"you don't indeed. You would not have the Radicals and Jacobins ramping over the country, shooting honest men in their shops and burning and ravaging, and—and generally playing the devil?"

"I suppose you think it is you that stops them?"

"No, ma'am, no," with a modest smile. "I don't stop them. I leave that to the yeomanry—old England's bulwark and their country's pride! But when the yeomanry 've done their part, I take them, and the law passes upon them. And

when they have been hung or transported and an example made, then you sleep comfortably in your beds. That is what I do. And I think I may say that next to Mr. Nadin of Manchester, who is the greatest man in our line out of London, I have done as much in that way as another."

Mrs. Gilson sniffed contemptuously.

"Well," she said, "if you have never done more than you've done since you've been here, it's a wonder the roof's on! Though what you expected to do, except keep a whole skin, passes me! There's the *Chronicle* in to-day, and such talks of riots at Glasgow and Paisley, and such meetings here and alarms there, it is a wonder to me"—with sarcasm—"they can do without you! To judge by what I hear, Lancashire way is just a kettle of troubles and boiling over, and bread that price everybody is wanting to take the old King's crown off his head."

"And his head off his body, ma'am!" Mr. Bishop added solemnly.

"So that it's little good you and your yeomanry seem to have done at Manchester, except get yourselves abused!"

"Ma'am, the King's crown is on his head," Mr. Bishop retorted, "and his head is on his body."

"Well? Not that his head is much good to him, poor mad gentleman."

"And King Louis, ma'am, years ago—what of him? The King of France, ma'am? Crown gone, head gone—all gone! And why? Because there was not a good blow struck in time, ma'am! Because, poor foolish foreigner, he had no yeomanry and no Bow Street, ma'am! But the Government, the British Government, is wiser. They are brave men—brave noble men, I should say,"—Mr. Bishop amended with respect, —"but with treason and misprision of treason stalking the land, with the lower orders, that should behave themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters, turned to ramping, roaring Jacobins seeking whom they may devour, and whose machine they may break, my lords would not sleep in their beds—no, not they, brave men as they are—if it were not for the yeomanry and the runners." He had to pause for breath.

Mrs. Gilson coughed drily.

"Leather's a fine thing," she said, "if you believe the cobbler."

"Well," Mr. Bishop answered, nodding his head confidently, "it's so far true you'd do ill without it."

But Mrs. Gilson was equal to the situation.

"Ay, underfoot," she said. "But everything in its place. My man, he be mad upon tod-hunting; but I never knew him go to Manchester 'Change to seek one."

"No?" Mr. Bishop held his pipe at arm's length, and smiled at it mysteriously. "Yet I've seen one there," he continued, "or in such another place."

"Where?"

"Common Garden, London."

"It was in a box, then."

"It was, ma'am," Mr. Bishop replied, with smiling emphasis. "It was in a box—'safe bind, safe find,' ma'am. That's the motto of my line, and that was it precisely. More by token it's not outside the bounds of possibility you may see"—he glanced towards the door as he knocked his pipe against his top-boot—"one of my tods in a box before morning."

Mrs. Gilson shot out her underlip and looked at him darkly. She never stooped to express surprise; but she was surprised. There was no mistaking the ring of triumph in the runner's tone; yet of all the unlikely things within the landlady's range none seemed more unlikely than that he should flush his game there. She had asked herself more than once why he was there; and why no coach stopped, no chaise changed horses, no rider passed or bagman halted, without running the gauntlet of his eye. For in that country of lake and mountain were neither riots nor meetings; and though Lancashire lay near, the echoes of strife sounded but weakly and fitfully across Cartmel Sands. Mills might be burning in Cheadle and Preston, men might be drilling in Bolland and Whitewell, sedition might be preaching in Manchester, all England might be in a flame with dear bread and no work, Cobbett's Twopenny Register, and Orator Hunt's declama-

tions—but neither the glare nor the noise had much effect on Windermere. Mr. Bishop's presence in that part seemed superfluous therefore ; seemed---- But before she could come to the end of her logic, her staid waiting-maid appeared, demanding four pennyworth of old Geneva for the gentleman in Mr. Rogers's room ; and when she was serving, Mrs. Gilson took refuge in incredulity.

" A man must talk if he can't do," she said—" if he's to live."

Mr. Bishop smiled, and patted his buckskin breeches with confidence.

" You'll believe, ma'am," he said, " when you see him walk into the coach with the handcuffs on his wrists."

" Ay, I shall ! "

The innuendo in the landlady's tone was so plain that her husband, who had entered while she was rinsing the noggin in which she had measured the gin, chuckled audibly. She turned an awful stare on him, and he collapsed. The Bow Street runner was less amenable to discipline.

" You sent the lad, Tom ? " he asked.

The landlord nodded, with an apprehensive eye on his wife.

" He should be back "—Mr. Bishop consulted a huge silver watch—" by eleven."

" Ay, sure."

" Where has he gone ? " Mrs. Gilson asked, with an ominous face.

She seldom interfered in stable matters ; but if she chose, it was understood that no department was outside her survey.

" Only to Kendal with a message for me," Bishop answered.

" At this time of the night ? "

" Ma'am "—Mr. Bishop rose and tapped his red waistcoat with meaning, almost with dignity—" the King has need of him. The King—God bless and restore him to health—will pay, and handsomely. For the why and the wherefore he has gone, his majesty's gracious prerogative is to say nothing " —with a smile. " That is the rule in Bow Street, and for this time we'll make it the rule under Bow Fell, if you please.

Moreover, what he took I wrote, ma'am, and as he cannot read and I sent it to one who will give it to another, his majesty will enjoy his prerogative as he should ! "

There was a spark in Mrs. Gilson's eye. Fortunately the runner saw it, and before she could retort he slipped out, leaving the storm to break about her husband's head. Some who had known Mr. Gilson in old days wondered how he bore his life, and why he did not hang himself—Mrs. Gilson's tongue was so famous. And more said he had reason to hang himself. Only a few, and they the wisest, noted that he who had once been Long Tom Gilson grew fat and rosy ; and these quoted a proverb about the wind and the shorn lamb. One—it was Bishop himself, but he had known them no more than three weeks—said nothing when the question was raised, but tapped his nose and winked, and looked at Long Tom as if he did not pity him overmuch.

CHAPTER III

A WEDDING MORNING

IN one particular at least the Bow Street runner was right. The Government which ruled England in that year, 1819, was made up of brave men; whether they were wise men or great men or far-seeing men is another question. The peace which followed Waterloo had been welcomed with enthusiasm. Men supposed that it would put an end to the enormous taxation and the strain which the nation had borne so gallantly during twenty years of war. The goddess of prosperity, with her wings of silver and her feathers of gold, was to bless a people which had long known only paper money. In a twinkling every trade was to flourish, every class to be more comfortable, every man to have work and wage, plenty and no taxes.

Instead, there insued a period of want and misery almost without a parallel. During the war the country had been self-supporting, wheat had risen, land suitable and unsuitable had been enclosed. Bread had been dear, but work had been plentiful. Now, at the prospect of open ports, wheat fell, land was left derelict, farmers were ruined, labourers in thousands went on the rates. Nor among the whirling looms of Lancashire or the furnaces of Staffordshire were things better. Government orders ceased with the war, while the exhausted Continent was too poor to buy. Here also thousands were cast out of work.

The cause of the country's misfortunes might be this or that. Whatever it was, the working classes suffered greater hardships than at any time during the war; and finding no haste to sympathise in a Parliament which represented their betters, began to form—ominous sign—clubs, and clubs

within clubs, and to seek redress by unlawful means. An open rising broke out in the Fen country, and there was fighting at Littleport and Ely. There were riots at Spa Fields in London, where murder was committed; and there were riots again, which almost amounted to a rebellion, in Derbyshire. At Stockport and in Birmingham immense mob meetings took place. In the northern counties the sky was reddened night after night by incendiary fires. In the Midlands looms were broken and furnaces extinguished. In Lancashire and Yorkshire the air was sullen with strikes and secret plottings, and spies, and cold and famine.

A Government of to-day had faltered, in pity as much as fear, and, faltering, had been lost. But in the Government of that day were some who in the teeth of defeat and bankruptcy, with a mad sovereign and a dissolute regent, had held on through twenty years of war—and had won. And these were not men to be lightly scared. True, they had but one panacea—repression; for the spectre of the French Revolution stood ever before them, pointing to the results of weakness. But if not wise, they were brave. England seethed and boiled under them like a crater about to erupt—nay, that might at any moment erupt. But they held on and never flinched: from my Lord Liverpool, whose name, though he ruled England for fifteen years, falls dead now, or is preserved only by the jingle—

Happy, happy Mr. Jenkinson!
Happy, happy Mr. Jenkinson!
I'm sure to you
Your lady's true,
For you have got a winking son!

from him to my Lord Castlereagh, who had faced the Irish rising of '98 and had seen it crushed at a cost of thirty thousand lives. These were not the men to imitate the example of the unlucky Louis and meet Revolution with open arms or rose-water.

Meantime England starved and swirled and bubbled under them; and timid men who had property sweated of nights; and poor men, loth to see their wives and children sit foodless

beside cold hearths, did violent things: until in the year 1819 things came to a kind of head. There was a meeting at Manchester in August. It was such a meeting as had never been seen in England. There were sixty thousand at it, there were eighty thousand, there were ninety thousand—some said one, some said the other. It was so large, at any rate, that it was difficult to say that it was not dangerous; and beyond doubt many there would have snatched at the least chance of rapine. Be that as it may, the magistrates, in the face of so great a concourse, lost their heads. They ordered a small force of yeomanry to disperse the gathering. The yeomanry became entangled—a second charge was needful: the multitude fled every way. In ten minutes the ground was clear; but six lives were lost and seventy persons were injured.

At once all England was cleft into parties—that which upheld the charge, and that which condemned it. Feelings which had been confined to the lower orders spread to the upper; and while from this date the section which was to pass the Reform Bill took new shape, underground more desperate enterprises were breeding. Undismayed, the people met at Paisley and at Glasgow, and at each place there were collisions with the soldiery.

Mr. Bishop had grounds, therefore, for his opinion of the Government of which he shared the favour with the yeomanry—their country's bulwark and its pride. But it is a far cry to Windermere, and no offset from the storm which was convulsing Lancashire stirred the face of the lake when Henrietta opened her window next morning and looked out on the day which was to change all for her. The air was still, the water grey and smooth, no gleam of sun showed. Yet the general aspect was mild; and would have been cheerful, if the more distant prospect which for the first time broke upon Henrietta's eyes had not raised it and her thoughts to the sublime. Beyond the water, above the green slopes and wooded knobs which fringed the lake, rose, ridge behind ridge, a wall of mountains. It stretched from the Peak of Coniston on the left, by the long snow-flecked screes of Bow

Fell, to the icy points of the Langdales on the right—a new world, remote, clear, beautiful, and still: so still, so remote, that it seemed to preach a sermon—to calm the hurry of her morning thoughts, and the tumult of youth within her. She stood awhile in awe. But her hair was about her shoulders, she was only half-dressed; and by-and-by, when her first surprise waned, she bethought herself that *he* might be below, and she drew back from the window with a blush. What more likely, what more loverlike, than that he should be below? Waiting—on this morning which was to crown his hopes—for the first sight of her face, the first opening of her lattice, the gleam of her white arm on the sill? Had it been summer, and had the rose-tree which framed the window been in bloom, what joy to drop with trembling fingers a bud to him, and to know that he would treasure it all his life—her last maiden gift! And he? Surely he would have sent her an armful to await her rising, that as she dressed she might plunge her face into their perfume, and, silently plighting her troth to him, renew the pure resolves which she had made in the night hours!

But when she peeped out shyly, telling herself that she was foolish to blush, and that the time for blushing was past, she failed to discover him. There was a girl—handsome after a dark fashion—seated on a low wall on the farther side of the road; and a group of four or five men were standing in front of the inn door, talking in excited tones. Conceivably he might be one of the men, for she could hear them better than she could see them—the door being a good deal to one side. But when she had cautiously opened her window and put out her head—her hair by this time being dressed—he was not among them.

She was drawing in her head, uncertain whether to pout or not, when her eyes met those of the young woman on the wall; and the latter smiled. Possibly she had noted the direction of Henrietta's glance, and drawn her inference. At any rate, her smile was so marked and so malicious that Henrietta felt her cheek grow hot, and lost no time in drawing back and closing the window.

"What a horrid girl!" she exclaimed.

Still, after the first flush of annoyance, she would have thought no more of it—would indeed have laughed at herself for her fancy—if Mrs. Gilson's strident voice had not at that moment brought the girl to her feet.

"Bess! Bess Hinkson!" the landlady cried, apparently from the doorway. "Hast come with the milk? Then come right in and let me have it? What are you gaping at there, you gaby? What has't to do with thee? I do think"—with venom—"the world is full of fools!"

The girl with a sullen air took up a milk-pail that stood beside her; she wore the short linsey petticoat of the rustic of that day, and a homespun bodice. Her hair, brilliantly black, and as thick as a horse's mane, was covered only by a kerchief knotted under her chin.

"Bess Hinkson? What a horrid name!" Henrietta muttered as she watched her cross the road. She did not dream that she would ever see the girl again.

The more as the men's voices—she was nearly ready to descend—fixed her attention next. She caught a word, then listened.

"The devil's in it if he's not gone Whitehaven way!" one said. "That's how he's gone! Through Carlisle, say you? Not he!"

"But without a horse? He'd no horse."

"And what if he'd not?" the first speaker retorted, with the impatience of superior intellect. "It's Tuesday, the day of the Man packet-boat, and he'd be away in her."

"But the packet don't leave Whitehaven till noon," a third struck in. "And they'll be there and nab him before that. S'help me, he has not gone Whitehaven way!"

"Maybe he'd take a boat?"

"He'd lack the time"—with scorn.

"He's took a boat here," another maintained. "That's what he has done. He's took a boat here and gone down in the dark to Newby Bridge."

"But there's not a boat gone!" another speaker retorted in triumph. "What do you say to that?"

So far Henrietta's ear followed the argument; but her mind lagged at the point where the matter touched her.

"The Man packet-boat?" she thought, as she tied the last ribbon at her neck and looked sideways at her appearance in the squat, filmy mirror. "That must be the boat to the Isle of Man. It leaves Whitehaven the same day as the Scotch boat, then. Perhaps there is but one, and it goes on to the Isle of Man. And I shall go by it. And then—and then——"

A knock at the door severed the thread, and drove the unwonted languor from her eyes. She cast a last look at her reflection in the glass, and turned herself about that she might review her back-hair. Then she swept the table with her eye, and began to stuff this and that into her bandbox. The knock was repeated.

"I am coming," she cried. She cast one very last look round the room, and, certain that she had left nothing, took up her bonnet and a shawl which she had used for a wrap over her riding-dress. She crossed the room towards the door. As she raised her hand to the latch, a smile lurked in the dimples of her cheeks. There was a gleam of fun in her eyes; the lighter side of her was uppermost again.

It was not her lover, however, who stood waiting outside, but Modest Ann—she went commonly by that name—the waiting-maid of the inn, who was said to mould herself on her mistress and to be only a trifle less formidable when roused. The two were something alike, for the maid was buxom and florid; and fame told of battles between them whence no ordinary woman, no ordinary tongue, no mortal save Mrs. Gilson, could have issued victorious. Fame had it also that Modest Ann remained after her defeat only by reason of an attachment, held by most to be hopeless, to the head ostler. And for certain, severe as she was, she permitted some liberty of speech on the subject.

Henrietta, however, did not know that here was another slave of love; and her face fell.

"Is Mr. Stewart waiting?" she asked.

"No, miss," the woman answered, civilly enough, but

staring as if she could never see enough of her. "But Mrs. Gilson will be glad if you'll speak to her."

Henrietta raised her eyebrows. It was on the tip of her tongue to answer, "Then let her come to me!" But she remembered that these people did not know who she was—knew indeed nothing of her. And she answered instead: "I will come. Where is she?"

"This way, miss. I'll show you the way."

Henrietta wondered, as the woman conducted her along several low-ceiled passages, and up and down odd stairs, and past windows which disclosed the hill rising immediately at the back of the house, what the landlady wanted.

"She is an odious woman!" she thought, with impatience. "How horrid she was to me last night! If ever there was a bully, she is one! And this creature looks not much better!"

Modest Ann, turning her head at the moment, belied the ill opinion by pointing out a step in a dark corner.

"There is a stair here, miss," she said. "Take care."

"Thank you," Henrietta answered in her clear, girlish voice. "Is Mr. Stewart with Mrs. —— What's her name?"

"Mrs. Gilson? No, miss."

And pausing, the woman opened a door, and made way for Henrietta to enter.

At that instant—and strange to say, not before—a dreadful suspicion leapt up in the girl's brain. What if her brother had followed her, and was here? Or worse still, Captain Clyne? What if she were summoned to be confronted with them and to be taken home in shameful durance, after the fashion of a naughty child that had behaved badly and was in disgrace? The fire sprang to her eyes, her cheeks burnt. It was too late to retreat; but her pretty head went up in the air, and her look as she entered spoke flat rebellion. She swept the room with a glance of flame.

However, there was no one to be burned up; no brother, no slighted, abandoned suitor. In the room, a good-sized, pleasant room looking on the lake, were only Mrs. Gilson, who stood beside the table, which was laid for breakfast, and

a strange man. The man was gazing from the window, but he turned abruptly, disclosing a red waistcoat, as her eye fell on him. She looked from one to the other in great surprise, in growing surprise. What did the man there ?

" Where is Mr. Stewart ? " she asked, her frigid tone expressing her feelings. " Is he not here ? "

Mrs. Gilson seemed to be about to answer, but the man forestalled her.

" No, miss," he said, " he is not."

" Where is he ? " She asked the question with undisguised sharpness.

Mr. Bishop nodded like a man well pleased.

" That is the point, miss," he answered. " Precisely. Where is he ? "

CHAPTER IV

TWO TO ONE

HENRIETTA, high-spirited and thoughtless, was more prone to anger than to fear, to resentment than to patience. But all find something formidable in the unknown; and the presence of this man who spoke with so much aplomb, and referred to her lover as if he had some concern in him, was enough to warn even her, and set her on her guard. Nevertheless she could not quite check the first impulse to resentment; the man's very presence was a liberty. And her tone when she spoke betrayed her sense of this.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that Mr. Stewart can be found if you wish to see him." She turned to Mrs. Gilson. "Be good enough," she said, "to send some one in search of him."

"I have done that already," the man Bishop answered.

The landlady, who did not move, seemed tongue-tied. But she did not take her eyes off the girl.

Henrietta frowned. She threw her bonnet and shawl on a side table.

"Be good enough to send again, then," she said, turning and speaking in the indifferent tone of one who was wont to have her orders obeyed. "He is probably within call. The chaise is ordered for ten."

Bishop advanced a step and tapped the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other.

"That is the point, miss!" he said impressively. "You've hit it. The chaise is ordered for ten. It is nine now, within a minute—and the gentleman cannot be found."

"Cannot be found?" she echoed, in astonishment at his

familiarity. "Cannot be found?" She turned imperiously to Mrs. Gilson. "What does this person mean?" she said. And her tone was brave; but the colour came and went in her cheeks, and the first flutter of alarm darkened her eyes.

The landlady found her voice.

"He means," she said bluntly, "that he did not sleep in his bed last night."

"Mr. Stewart?"

"The gentleman who came with you."

"Oh, but," Henrietta cried, "you must be jesting?" She would not, she could not, give way to the doubt that assailed her.

"It is no jest," Bishop answered gravely, and with something like pity in his voice. For the girl looked very fair and very young, and wore her dignity prettily. "It is no jest, miss, believe me. But perhaps we could read the riddle—we should know more at any rate—if you were to tell us from what part you came yesterday."

But she had her wits about her, and she was not going to tell them that! No, no! Moreover, on the instant she had a thought—that this was no jest, but a trick, a cruel, cowardly trick, to draw from her the knowledge which they wanted, and which she must not give! Beyond doubt that was it; she snatched thankfully at the notion. This odious woman, taking advantage of Stewart's momentary absence, had called in the man, and thought to bully her, a young girl in a strange place, out of the information which she had wished to get the night before.

The impertinents! But she would be a match for them.

"That is my affair," she said.

"But——"

"And will remain so!" she continued warmly. "For the rest, I am inclined to think that this is a trap of some sort! If so, you may be sure that Mr. Stewart will know how to resent it, and any impertinence offered to me. You"—she turned suddenly upon Mrs. Gilson—"you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Mrs. Gilson nodded oracularly.

"I am ashamed of somebody," she said.

The girl thought that she was gaining the advantage.

"Then at once," she said, "let Mr. Stewart know that I am waiting for him. Do you hear, madam?" She stamped the floor with her foot, and looked the prettiest fury imaginable. "And see that this person leaves the room. Good-morning, sir. You will hear from Mr. Stewart what I think of your intrusion."

Bishop opened his mouth to reply. But he caught Mrs. Gilson's eye; and by a look, such a look as appalled even the Bow Street runner's stout heart, she indicated the door. After a second of hesitation he passed out meekly.

When he was gone, "Very good, miss," the landlady said in the tone of one who restrained her temper with difficulty—"very good. But if you're to be ready you'd best eat your breakfast—if, that is, it is good enough for you!" she added. And with a very grim face she swept from the room and left Henrietta in possession of the field.

The girl sprang to the window and looked up and down the road. She had the same view of the mild autumn morning, of the grey lake and distant range of hills, which had calmed her thoughts an hour earlier. But the beauty of the scene availed nothing now. She was flushed with vexation—impatient, resentful. Where was he? He was not in sight. Then where could he be? And why did he leave her? Did he think that he need no longer press his suit? that the need for *petits soins* and attentions was over? Oh, but she would show him! And in a moment all the feelings of the petted, spoiled girl were up in arms.

"They are horrid!" she cried, angry tears in her eyes. "It's an outrage—a perfect outrage! And he is no better. How dare he leave me, this morning of all mornings?"

On which there might have stolen into her mind—so monstrous did his neglect seem—a doubt, a suspicion; the doubt and the suspicion which she had repelled a few minutes earlier. But, as she turned, her eyes fell on the breakfast-table; and vexation was not proof against a healthy appetite.

"I will show him," she thought resentfully, "that I am

not so dependent on him as he thinks. I shall not wait—I shall take my breakfast. That odious woman was right for once."

And she sat down in the seat placed for her. But as quickly she was up again, and at the oval glass over the mantel—where Samuel Rogers had often viewed his cadaverous face—to inspect herself and be sure that she was looking her best; so that *his* despair, when he came and found her cold and distant, might be the deeper. Soon satisfied she returned, smiling dangerously, to her seat; and this time she fell-to upon the eggs and girdle-cakes, and the home-cured ham, and the tea at ten shillings a pound. The room had a window to the lake, and a second window looking southwards, not far from the first. Though low-ceiled, it was of a fair size, with a sunk cupboard, with glazed upper doors, on each side of the fireplace, and cushioned seats in the window-places. In a recess near the door—the room was full of corners—were book-shelves; and on the other side of the door stood a tall clock with a very pale face. The furniture was covered with some warm red stuff, well worn; and an air of that snug comfort, which was valued by Englishmen of the day, prevailed, and went well with the scent of the China tea.

But neither tea nor comfort, nor the cheerful blaze on the hearth, could long hold Henrietta's thoughts, nor resentment repress her anxiety. Presently she began to listen after every mouthful: her fork was as often suspended as at work. Her pretty face grew troubled, and her brow more deeply puckered, until her wandering eye fell on the clock, and she saw that the slowly jerking hand was on the verge of the half-hour.

Then she sprang up, honestly frightened. She flew to the window that looked on the lake and peered out anxiously; thence to the side window, but got no glimpse of him. She came back distracted to the table and stood pressing her hands to her eyes. What if they were right, and he had not slept in his bed? What if something had happened to him? But that was impossible! Impossible! Things did not happen on such mornings as this! On wedding mornings!

Yet if that were the case, and they had sent for her that they might break it to her—and then their hearts, even that woman's heart, had failed them? What—what then?

She was trying to repel the thought when she fancied that she heard a sound at the door, and with a gasp of relief she looked up. If he had entered at that moment, she would have flung herself into his arms and forgiven all and forgotten all. But he did not enter, and her heart sank again, and lower. She went slowly to the door and listened, and found that the sound which she had heard was caused by the whispering of persons outside.

She summoned her pride to her aid. Then she opened the door to its full extent and walked haughtily back to the table, and, turning, waited for them to enter. But to speak, to command her voice, was harder, and it was all she could do to murmur:

"Something has happened to him"—her lip fluttered ominously—"and you have come to tell me?"

"Nothing that I know of," Bishop answered cheerfully. He and the landlady had walked in, as of course, and closed the door behind them. "Nothing at all."

"No?" She could hardly believe him.

"Not the least thing in life, miss," he repeated. "He's alive and well for what I know. Alive and well!"

She sat down on a chair that stood beside her, and the colour flowed back to her cheeks. She laughed weakly.

"I was afraid that something had happened," she murmured.

"No," Mr. Bishop answered, more seriously, "it's not that. It's not that, miss. But it's trouble. Now if you were to tell me," he continued, leaning forward persuasively, "where you come from, I need have hardly a word with you. I can see you're a lady; your friends will come; and, s'help me, in six months you'll have your mare again, and not know it happened! Now——"

"I shall not tell you," she said.

The officer shook his head, surprised by her firmness.

"Come now, miss—be advised," he urged. "Be reason-

able. Just think for once that others may know better than you, and save me the trouble—that's a good young lady."

But the wheedling appeal, the familiar tone, grated on her. Her fingers, tapping on the table, betrayed impatience as well as alarm.

"I do not understand you," she said, with some return of her former distance. "If nothing has happened to Mr. Stewart, I do not understand what you can have to say to me, nor why you are here."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, miss," he said, "if you must have it, you must. I'm bound to say you are not a young lady to take a hint."

That frightened her.

"If nothing has happened to him——" she murmured, and looked from one to the other; from Mr. Bishop's smug face to the landlady's stolid visage.

"It's not what has happened to him," the runner answered bluntly. "It is what is likely to happen to him."

He drew from his pocket as he spoke a large leather case, unstrapped it, and put the strap, which would have handily spliced a cart-trace of these days, between his teeth. Then he carefully selected from the mass of papers which the case contained a single letter. It was written, as the letters of that day were written, on three sides of a square sheet of coarsish paper; the fourth side served for envelope—that is, it bore the address and seal. But Mr. Bishop was careful to fold the letter in such a way that these and the greater part of the writing were hidden. He proffered the paper, so arranged, to Henrietta.

"D'you know the handwriting," he asked, "of that letter, miss?"

She had watched his actions with fascinated eyes, and could not think, could not imagine, whither they tended. She was really frightened now. But her mettle was high; she had the nerves of youth, and she hid her dismay. The hand with which she took the letter was steady as a rock, the manner with which she looked at it composed; but no sooner had

her eyes fallen on the writing than she uttered an exclamation, and the colour rose to her cheeks.

"How did you get this?" she cried.

"No, miss, no," the runner answered. "One at a time. The question is, Do you know the fist? The handwriting, I mean. But I see you do."

"It is Mr. Stewart's," she answered.

He glanced at Mrs. Gilson as if to bespeak her attention.

"Just so," he said. "It is Mr. Stewart's. And I warrant you have others like it, and could prove the fact if it were needed. No—don't read it, miss, if you please," he continued. "You can tell me without that whether the gentleman has any friends in these parts."

"None."

"That you know of?"

"I never heard of any," she answered. Her astonishment was so great that she did not now think of refusing to answer. And besides, here was his handwriting. Why did he not come? The clock was on the point of striking: at this hour, at this minute, they should have been leaving the door of the inn.

"No, miss," Bishop answered, exchanging a look with the landlady. "Just so, you've never heard of any. Then one more question, if you please. You are going north, to Scotland, to be married to-day. Now which way, I wonder?"

She frowned at him in silence. She began to see his drift.

"By Keswick and Carlisle?" he continued, keenly watching her face. "Or by Kendal and Penrith? Or by Cockermouth and Whitehaven? But no. There's only the Isle of Man packet out of Whitehaven."

"It goes on to Dumfries," she said. The words escaped her in spite of herself.

He smiled as he shook his head.

"No," he said; "it'd be a very long way round if it did. But Mr. Stewart told you that, did he? I see he did. Well, you've had an escape, miss. That's all I can say."

The colour rose to her very brow, but her eyes met his boldly.

"How?" she said. "What do you mean?"

"How?" he repeated. "If you knew, miss, who the man was—your Mr. Stewart—you'd know how! And what you have escaped!"

"Who he was?" she muttered.

"Ay, who he was!" he retorted. "I can tell you this at least, young lady"—bluntly—"he's a man that's very badly wanted. Uncommon badly wanted!"—with a grin. "In more places than one, but nowhere more than where he came from."

"Wanted?" she said, the colour fading in her cheek. "For what? What do you mean?"

"For what?"

"That is what I asked."

His face was a picture of importance and solemnity. He looked at the landlady, as much as to say, "See how I will prostrate her!" But nothing indicated his sense of the avowal he was going to make so much as the fact that instead of raising his voice he lowered it.

"You shall have the answer, miss, though I thought to spare you," he said. "He's wanted for being an uncommon desperate villain, I am sorry to say. For treason and misprision of treason, and conspiracy. Ay, but that's the man you've come away with," shaking his head solemnly. "He's wanted for bloody conspiracy—ay, it is so indeed—equal to any Guy Fawkes, against my lord the King, his crown and dynasty! Seven indictments—and not mere counts, miss—have been found against him, and those who were with him, and him the worst! And when he's taken, as he's sure to be taken by-and-by, he'll suffer!" And Mr. Bishop nodded portentously.

Her face was quite white now.

"Mr. Stewart?" she gasped.

"You call him Stewart," the runner replied coolly. "I call him Walterson—Walterson the younger. But he has passed by a capful of names. Anyway, he's wanted for the business in Spa Fields in '16, and half a dozen things besides."

The colour returned to Henrietta's cheeks with a rush. Her fine eyes glowed, her lips parted.

"A conspirator!" she murmured. "A conspirator!" She fondled the word as if it had been "love" or "kisses." "I suppose, then," she continued, with a sidelong look at Bishop, "if he were taken he would lose his life?"

"Sure as eggs!"

Henrietta drew a deep breath; and with the same sidelong look:

"He would be beheaded—in the Tower?"

The runner laughed with much enjoyment.

"Lord save your innocent heart, miss," he said—"no! He would hang outside Newgate."

She shuddered violently at that. The glow of eye and cheek faded, and tears rose instead. She walked to a window, and with her back to them dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. Then she turned.

"Is that all?" she said.

"Good God!" Bishop cried. He stared, nonplussed. "Is that all?" he said. "Would you have more?"

"Neither more nor less," she answered—between tears and smiles, if his astonished eyes did not deceive him. "For now I know—I know why he left me, why he is not here."

"Good lord!"

"If you thought, sir," she continued, drawing herself up and speaking with indignation, "that because he was in danger, because he was proscribed, because a price was set on his head, I should desert him, and betray him, and sell his secrets to you—I, his wife—you were indeed mistaken!"

"But damme," Mr. Bishop cried in amazement almost too great for words, "you are not his wife!"

"In the sight of Heaven," she answered firmly, "I am." She was shaking with excitement. "In the sight of Heaven I am," she repeated solemnly. And so real was the feeling she forgot for the moment the situation in which her lover's flight had left her. She forgot herself, forgot all but the danger that menaced him, and the resolution that never, never, never should it part her from him.

Mr. Bishop would fain have answered fittingly, and to that end sought words. But he found none strong enough.

"Well, I am dashed!" was all he could find to say. "I *am* dashed!" Then—the thing was too much for one—he sought support in Mrs. Gilson's eye. "There, ma'am," he said vehemently, extending one hand, "I ask you! You are a woman of sense! I ask you! Did you ever? Did you ever, out of London or in London?"

The landlady's answer was as downright as it was unwelcome.

"I never see such a fool!" she said, "if that's what you mean. And you"—with scorn—"to call yourself a Bow Street man! Bow Street? Bah!"

Mr. Bishop opened his mouth.

"A parish constable's a Solomon to you!" she continued before he could speak.

His face was purple, his surprise ludicrous.

"To me?" he ejaculated incredulously. "S'help me, ma'am, you are mad, or I am! What have I done?"

"It's not what you've done!" Mrs. Gilson answered grimly. "It's what you've left undone! Oh, you gaby!" she continued, with unction. "You poor creature! You bag of goose-feathers! D'you know no more of women than that? Why, I've kept my mouth shut the last ten blessed minutes for nothing else but to see what a fool you'd make of yourself! And for certain it was not for nothing!"

Henrietta tapped the table.

"Perhaps when you've done," she said, with tragic dignity, "you will both be good enough to leave the room. I desire to be alone."

Her eyes were like stars. In her voice was an odd mixture of elation and alarm.

Mrs. Gilson turned on the instant and engaged her.

"Don't talk nonsense!" she said. "Desire to be alone indeed! You deserve to be alone, miss, with bread and water, and the lock on the door! Oh, you may stare! But do you do now what he should have made you do a good half-hour ago, and you'll feel a little less like a play actress. Alone indeed! Read that letter and tell me then what you think of yourself!"

Henrietta's eyes sparkled with anger, but she fought hard for her dignity.

"I am not used to impertinence," she said. "You forget yourself!"

"Read," Mrs. Gilson retorted, "and say what you like then. You'll have little stomach for saying anything," she added in an undertone, "or I'm a Dutchman!"

Henrietta saw nothing for it but to read under protest, and she did so with a smile of contempt. In the circumstances it seemed the easier course. But, alas! as she read her pretty, angry face changed. She had that extreme delicacy of complexion which betrays the least ebb and flow of feeling: and in turn perplexity, wonder, resentment, all were painted there, and vividly. She looked up.

"To whom was this written?" she asked, her voice unsteady.

Mrs. Gilson was pitiless. "Look at the beginning," she answered.

The girl turned back mechanically, and read that which she had read before. But then with surprise; now with dread.

"Who is—Sally?" she muttered.

Despite herself, her voice seemed to fail her on the word. And she dared not meet their eyes.

"Who's Sally?" Mrs. Gilson repeated briskly. "Why, his wife, to be sure! Who should she be?"

CHAPTER V

A JEZEBEL

THERE was a loud drumming in Henrietta's ears, and a dimness before her eyes. In the midst of this a voice, which she would not have known for her own, cried loudly and clearly, "No!" And again, more violently, "No!"

"But it is 'Yes!'" the landlady answered coolly. "Why not? D'you think"—with rough contempt—"he's the first man that's lied to a woman? Or you're the first woman that's believed a rascal? She's his wife right enough, my girl,"—comfortably. "Don't he ask after his children? If you'll turn to the bottom of the second page you'll see for yourself! Oh, quite the family man, he is."

The girl's hands shook like ash-leaves in a light breeze; the paper rustled in her grasp. But she had regained command of herself—she came of a stiff, proud stock, and the very brusqueness of the landlady helped her; and she read word after word and line after line of the letter. She passed from the bottom of the second sheet to the head of the third, and so to the end. But so slowly, so laboriously that it was plain that her mind was busy reading between the lines—was busy comparing, sifting, remembering.

To Bishop's credit be it said, he kept his eyes off the girl. But at last he spoke.

"I'd that letter from his wife's hand," he said. "They are married right enough—in Hounslow Church, miss. She lives there, two doors from the 'George' posting-house, where folks change horses between London and Windsor. She was a waiting-maid in the coffee-room, and 'twas a rise for her. But she's not seen him for three years—reason, he's been in hiding—nor had a penny from him. Now she'd got it some

time ago that he'd taken up with a woman hereabouts, and that's what brought me here. He's a fine gift of the gab, but for all that his father's naught but a little apothecary, and as smooth a rogue and as big a Radical, one as the tother! I would to G—d," the runner continued, suddenly reminded of his loss, "I'd took him last night when he came in! But——"

"That'll do!" Mrs. Gilson said, cutting him short, as if he were a tap she had turned on for her own purposes. "You can go now!"

"But——"

"Did you hear me, man? Go!" the landlady thundered. And a glance of her eye was sufficient to bring the runner to heel like a scolded hound. "Go, and shut the door after you," she continued, with sharpness. "I'll have no eavesdropping in my house, prerogative or no prerogative!"

When he was gone she showed a single spark of mercy. She went to the fire and proceeded to mend it noisily, as if it were the one thing in the world to be attended to. She put on wood, and swept the hearth, and made a to-do with it. True, the respite was short; a minute or two at most. But when the landlady had done, and turned her attention to the girl, Henrietta had moved to the window, so that only her back was visible. Even then for quite a long minute Mrs. Gilson stood, with arms akimbo and pursed lips, reading the lines of the girl's figure and considering her; as if even her rugged bosom knew pity. And in the end it was Henrietta who spoke, humbly, alas! now, and in a voice almost inaudible.

"Will you leave me, please?" she said.

"I will," Mrs. Gilson answered gruffly. "But on one understanding, miss—and I'll have it plain. It must be all over. If you are satisfied he is a rascal—he's four children—well and good. But I'll have no goings on with such in my house, and no making two bites of a cherry! Here's a bit of paper I'll put on the table."

"I am satisfied," Henrietta whispered. Under the woman's blunt words she shook as under blows.

But Mrs. Gilson seemed to pay little heed to her feelings.

"Very good, very good!" she answered. "But I'll leave the paper all the same. It's but a bit of a hand-bill that fool of a runner brought with him, but 'twill show you what kind of a poor thing your Joe was. Just a spouter, that got drunk on his own words and shot a poor inoffensive gentleman in a shop! Shame on him for a little dirty murder, if ever there was one."

"Oh, please go! please go!" Henrietta wailed.

"Very well. But there's the paper. And do you begin to think"—removing with housewifely hand a half-eaten dish of eggs from the table, and deftly poising a large ham on the same arm—"do you begin to think like a grown, sensible woman what you'd best do. The shortest folly's soonest over! That's my opinion."

And with that she opened the door, and, heavily laden, made her way downstairs.

The girl turned and stood looking at the room, and her face was woefully changed. It was white and pinched, and full of strained wonder; as if she asked herself if she were indeed herself, and if it could really be to her that this thing had happened. She looked older by years, she looked almost plain. But in her eyes was a latent fierceness. An observer might have guessed that her pride suffered more sharply than her heart. Possibly she had never loved the man with half the fervour with which she now hated him.

And that was true, though the change was sudden; ay, and though Henrietta did not know it, nor would have admitted it. She suffered notwithstanding, and horribly. For, besides pride, there were other things that lay wounded and bleeding: her happy-go-lucky nature that had trusted lightly, and would be slow to trust again; her girlish hopes and dreams; and the foolish fancy that had passed for love, and in a single day, an hour, a minute, might have become love. And one other thing—the bloom of her innocence. For though she had escaped, she had come too near the fire not to fear it henceforth, and bear with her the smell of singeing.

As she thought of that, of her peril and her narrow escape, and reflected how near she had come to utter shipwreck, her

face lost its piteous look and grew harder, and sharper, and sterner ; so that the wealth of bright hair, that was her glory, crowned it only too brilliantly, only too youthfully. She saw how he had fooled her to the top of her bent—how he had played on her romantic tastes, and her silly desire for secrecy. A low-born creature, an agitator, hiding from the consequences of a cowardly crime, he had happened upon her in his twilight walks, desired her—for an amusement—turned her head with inflated phrases, dazzled her inexperience with hints of the world and his greatness in it. And she—she had thought herself wiser than all about her, as she had thought him preferable to the legitimate lover assigned to her by her family. And she had brought herself to this ! This was the end !

Or no, not the end. The game, for what it was worth, was over. But the candle-money remained to be paid. Goldsmith's stanzas had still their vogue ; mothers quoted them to their daughters. Henrietta knew that when lovely woman stoops to folly, even to folly of a lighter dye—when she learns, though not too late, that men betray, there is a penalty to be paid. The world is censorious, was censorious then, and apt to draw from very small evidence a very dark inference. Henrietta's face, flaming suddenly from brow to neck, proved her vivid remembrance of this. Had she not called herself—the words burned her—" his wife in the sight of Heaven " ? And now she must go back—if they would receive her—go back and face those whom she had left so lightly, face the lover whom she had flouted and betrayed, meet the smirks of the men and the sneers of the women, and the thoughts of both ! Go back to blush before the servants, and hear from the lips of that grim prude, her sister-in-law, many things, both true and untrue !

The loss of the tender future, of the rosy anticipations in which, as in a fairy palace, she had lived for weeks—she could bear this ! And the rough awakening from the maiden dream which she had taken for love—she must bear that too, though it left her world cold as the sheet of grey water before her, and repellent as the bald screes that frowned above it. She

could bear the heartsickness, the loneliness, the pain that treachery inflicts on innocence; but the shame of the home-coming—if they would receive her, which she doubted—the coarse taunts and stinging innuendoes, the nods, the shrugs, the winks—these she could not face. Anything, anything were better, if anything she could find—deserted, flung aside, homeless as she was.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Mrs. Gilson, descending with a sour face, had come upon a couple of maids listening at the foot of the stairs. She made sharp work of them, sending them packing with fleas in their ears. But they proved to be only the *avant-couriers* of scandal. Below were the Troutbeck apothecary and a dozen gossips, whom the news had brought over the hill; and hangers-on without number. All, however, had no better fate with Mrs. Gilson; not the parish constable of Bowness, whose staff went for little, nor even Mr. Bishop, that great man out of doors, at whose slightest nod ostlers ran and helpers bowed; he smiled, superior indeed, but he had the wisdom to withdraw. In two minutes, in truth, there remained of the buzzing crowd only the old curate of Troutbeck supping small beer with a toast in it. And he, it was said, knew better than any the length of the landlady's foot.

But this was merely to move the centre of ferment to the inn-yard, where the news that the house had sheltered a man for whose capture the Government offered six hundred guineas bred wild excitement. He had vanished, it was true, like a child in the mist. But he might be found again. Meantime the rustics gaped on the runner with saucer eyes, or flew hither and thither at his beck. And Radicals being at a discount in the Lowther country, and six hundred guineas a sum for which old Hinkson the miser would have bartered his soul, some spat on their hands and swore what they would do if they met the devil; while others, who were not apt at thinking, retired into corners and with knitted brows and hands plunged into breeches pockets conjured up a map of the world about Windermere.

It should be borne in mind that at this time police were unknown—outside London. There were parish constables; but where these were not cobblers, which was strangely often the case, they were men past work, appointed to save the rates. If a man's pocket were picked, therefore, or his stack fired, his daughter abducted, or his mare stolen, he had only himself and his friends to look to. He must follow the offender, confront him, seize him, carry him to gaol—he must do all himself. Naturally, if he were a timid man or unpopular, the rogue went free—sometimes went free again and again until he became the terror of the countryside: a fact which enables us to understand the terrors of lonely houses in those days, and explains the repugnance to life in solitary places which is traditional in some parts of England.

On the other hand, where the crime was known and outrageous, it became every man's business. It was every man's duty to join the hue and cry: if he did not take part in it he was a bad neighbour. Mr. Bishop, therefore, did not lack helpers. On the first discovery of Walterson's flight, which the officer had made a little after daybreak, he had sent horsemen to Whitehaven, Keswick, and Kendal, and a boat to Newby Bridge. The nearer shore and the woods on the point below the bishop's house—some called it Llandaff House—were well beaten, and the alarm was given in Bowness on the one hand and in Ambleside on the other. The general voice had it that the man had got away early in the night to Whitehaven. But some stated that a pedlar had met him, on foot and alone, crossing the Kirkstone Pass at daybreak; and others, that he had been viewed skulking under a haystack near Troutbeck Bridge. That a beautiful girl, his companion, had been seized, and was under lock and key in the house, was whispered by some, but denied by more. Nevertheless, the report won its way, so that there were few moments when the chatterers who buzzed about the runner had not an eye on the upper windows and a voice ready to proclaim their discoveries.

Even those who believed the story, however, were far from having a true picture of poor Henrietta. With some

she passed for a London Jezebel ; locked up, it was whispered, with a bottle of gin to keep her quiet until the chaise was ready to take her to gaol. Others pictured her as the frenzied leader of one of the women's clubs which had lately sprung up in Lancashire, and of which the principal aim, according to the Tories, was to copy the French fish-hags and march one day to Windsor to drag the old king, blind and mad as he was, to the scaffold. Others spoke of a casual light o' love picked up at Lancaster, but a rare piece of goods for looks—which seemed a pity, and one of those tragedies of the law that were beginning to prick men's consciences : since there was little doubt that the baggage, poor lass, would hang with her tempter.

A word or two of these whisperings reached Mrs. Gilson's ears. But she only sniffed her contempt, or showing herself for a moment at the door, chilled by the coldness of her eye the general enthusiasm. Then, woe betide the servant whom she chanced to spy among the idlers. If a man, he was glad to hide himself in the stable ; if a woman, she was very likely to go back to her work with a smarting cheek. Even the Troutbeck apothecary, a roistering blade who was making a day of it, kept a wary eye on the door, and, if he could, slipped round the corner when she appeared.

But Juno herself had her moments of failure, and no mortals are exempt from them. About four in the afternoon Mrs. Gilson got a shock. Modest Ann, her face redder than usual, came to her and whispered in her ear. In five seconds the landlady's face was also redder than usual, and her frown was something to see. She rose.

"I don't believe it!" she answered. "You are daft, woman, to think of such a thing!"

"It's true, missus, as I stand here!" Ann declared.

"To Appleby gaol? To-night?"

"That very thing! And her"—with angry fervour—"scarce more than a child, as you may say!"

"Old enough to make a fool of herself!" Mrs. Gilson retorted spitefully. "But I don't believe it!" she added. "You've heard amiss, my girl!"

"Well, you'll see," the woman answered. "'Twill be soon settled. The justice is crossing the road now, and that there Bishop with him; and that little wizened chap of a clerk that makes up the Salutation books; and the man that keeps the gaol at Appleby: they've been waiting for him —he's to take her. And there's a chaise ordered to be ready if it's wanted. It's true, as I stand here!"

Mrs. Gilson's form swelled until it was a wonder that the whalebone stood. But in those days things were of good British make.

"A chaise?" she said.

"Yes."

"There's no chaise," the landlady answered firmly, "goes from here on that errand!"

Modest Ann knew that when her mistress spoke in that tone the thing was as good as done. But the waiting-maid, whose heart, for all her temper, was softer than her features, at which Jim the ostler was supposed to boggle, was not greatly comforted.

"They'll only send to the Salutation," she said despondently.

"Let them send!" the landlady replied. And taking off her apron, she prepared to face the enemy. "They'll talk to me before they do!"

But Ann, great as was her belief in her mistress, shook her head.

"What can you do against the law?" she muttered. "I wish that Bishop may never eat another morsel of hot victuals as long as he lives! Gravy with the joint? Never while I am serving!"

CHAPTER VI

THE INQUIRY

"WHO is there?"

Henrietta lifted her tear-stained face from the pillow and awaited the answer. Three hours earlier, her head aching, her heart full, uncertain what to do, or what must ensue, she had fled from the commotion below, and locking herself in her bedroom, had lain down with her misery. It was something to find in the apathy of prostration a brief respite; it was something to close her eyes and lie still. For a while she might keep her door locked, might nurse her wretchedness, might evade rude looks and curious questions, might postpone decision.

For the pride that had sustained her in the morning had failed, as the day wore on. Solitude and the lack of food—she had refused to eat at midday—had worn down her spirit. At last tears had come, and plentifully—and repentance. She did not say that the fault was her own, but she knew it, she admitted it. The man had behaved to her wickedly, treacherously, horribly; but she had brought it on herself. He had laid the snare in vain had she not stooped to deceit—had she not consented to mislead her friends, to meet him secretly, to listen to him with as little heed of propriety as if she had been Sue at the forge, or Bess in the still-room. Her own vanity, her own folly, had brought her to the very verge of ruin; and with shame she owned that there was more in the old saws with which her sister-in-law had deafened her than her inexperience had imagined. But the discovery came late. She was smirched. And what—what was she to do? Where could she go to avoid the full penalty—the

taunts, the shame, the disgrace that awaited her in the old home? Even if the old home were still open to her.

Meanwhile she got no answer. And "Who is there?" she repeated wearily.

The reply came muffled through the door. "You are wanted downstairs, lady."

She rose languidly. Perhaps the time was come. Perhaps her brother was here, had followed, traced, and found her. For the moment she was all but indifferent. To-morrow she would suffer, and sorely; but to-day she had fallen too low. She went slowly to the door and opened it.

Ann stood in the passage. "They want you downstairs, miss," she said.

The girl saw that the woman looked queerly at her, but she was prepared for such looks. Unconsciously she had steeled herself to bear them. "Very well," she returned, and did not ask who wanted her. But she went back to her table, dabbed her eyes with cold water, and smoothed her hair and her neck-ribbon—she had pride enough for that. Then she went back to the door. The woman was still outside, still staring.

"I did not know that you were waiting," Henrietta said, faintly surprised. "I know my way down."

"I was to come with you, miss."

"Where are they, then?"

"They are where you were this morning," the woman answered. "This way, if you please."

Henrietta followed listlessly, and fancied in the sullenness of her apathy that she was proof against aught that could happen. But when she had descended the stairs and neared the door of Mr. Rogers's room—which was in a dusky passage—she found herself, to her astonishment, brushing past a row of people, who flattened themselves against the wall to make room. Their eyes and their hard breathing—perhaps because she was amongst them before she saw them—impressed her so disagreeably that her heart fluttered, she even paused. For an imperceptible instant she was on the point of turning and going back. But, fortunately at that

moment, the door opened wide, Ann stood aside, and Mrs Gilson showed herself. She beckoned to the girl to enter.

"Come in, miss," she said gruffly, as Henrietta complied. "Here's some gentlemen want to ask you a question or two."

Henrietta saw two persons with their faces turned towards her seated behind a table, which bore ink and paper and one or two calf-bound books. Behind were three or four other persons standing, and beside the door close to her were as many more, also on their feet. But nowhere could she see the dreaded face of her brother, or, indeed, any face that she knew. And after advancing firmly enough into the room, she stopped, and turning, looked uncertainly at Mrs. Gilson.

"There must be some mistake," she murmured. "I have come into the——"

"Wrong room, miss?"—the speaker was Bishop, who was one of the three or four who stood behind the two at the table. "No, there's no mistake, miss," he continued, with exaggerated cheerfulness. "It's just a formality. Only just a formality. These gentlemen wish to ask you one or two questions."

The colour rose to her cheeks.

"To ask me?" she repeated, with a slight ring of hauteur in her voice.

"Just so," Bishop answered. "It will be all right, I am sure. But attend to this gentleman, if you please, and annswer his questions."

And he indicated with his finger the one seated before him.

The girl, frowning angrily, lowered her eyes and met those of the person at the table. Apparently her aspect had checked the exordium he had prepared; for instead of addressing her in the tones which were wont to fill the justice room at Ambleside, Mr. Hornyold, rector and magistrate, sat back in his chair, staring at her in silence. It was evident that his astonishment was great. He was a portly man, and tall, about forty years old, and, after his fashion, handsome. He had well-formed features, and a mobile smile; but his face was masterful—overmasterful, some thought;

nd his eyes were hard, when a sly look did not soften, without nuch improving, their expression. The girl before him was oung, adorably fresh—above all, beautiful; and the grin f the man peeped from under the mask of the justice. He tared at her, and she at him, and perhaps of the two he was ne more taken aback. At any rate, it was Henrietta who roke the silence.

"I do not understand," she said, with ill-suppressed ndignation, "why I am here. Are you sure that there is o mistake?"

He found his voice then.

"Quite sure," he said drily. And he laid down the pen vith which he had been toying while he stared at her. He at a little more erect in his chair. "There is no mistake," e continued, "though for your sake, young woman, I wish could think that there was. I wish I could think that here was," he repeated in a more indulgent tone, "since ou seem, at any rate, a more respectable person than I xpected to see."

"Sir!"

The girl's eyes opened wide. Her face turned scarlet.

He leaned forward.

"Come, my girl," he said—and his familiar tone struck er, as it were, in the face—never had such a tone been used o her before! "Let us have no nonsense. You will not mprove your case that way. Let me tell you we are accus-omed to all sorts here. You must speak when you are old to speak, and be silent when you are bid, and in the neantime listen to me! Listen to me, I say!" staying by n imperious nod the passionate remonstrance that was on er lips. "And remember where you are, if you wish to e well treated. If you are sensible and tell the truth, some ther course will be found than that which, it is to be feared, nust end this business."

"But by what right," Henrietta cried, striving to command oth her rage and her fear—"by what right——"

"Am I about to question you?"—with a smirk of humour nd a glance at the audience. "By the right of the law,

young woman, which I would have you know is of some account here, however it may stand in Lancashire."

"The law?" she stammered. And she looked round terrified. "Why? Why? What have I done?" she cried pathetically.

For a moment all was dark before her.

He laughed slyly.

"That's to be seen," he said. "No hanging matter"—humorously—"I hope. And as it's good law that everybody's innocent—that's so, Mr. Dobbie, is it not?"—to the clerk—"until he's found guilty, let somebody set the young woman a chair."

"I can stand!" she cried.

"Nay, you sit down!" muttered a gruff voice in her ear. And a hand—it was Mrs. Gilson's—pressed her down in the chair. "And you answer straight out," the woman continued coolly, in defiance of Mr. Dobbie, the clerk's, scandalised look, "and there's not one of 'em can do you any harm."

The magistrate nodded.

"That's true," he said tolerantly, "always supposing that you've done no wrong, my girl—no wrong beyond getting into bad company, as I trust will turn out to be the case. Now, Mr. Dobbie, take down her answers. What's your name, my girl, first?"

Henrietta looked at him steadily; she was trying to place herself in these new conditions. Something like composure was coming back to her flushed and frightened face. She reflected, and having reflected, she was silent.

He fancied that she had not heard, or did not understand.

"Your name, young woman," he repeated, "and your last place of abode? Speak up! And don't be afraid."

But she did not answer.

He frowned.

"Come, come," he said. "Did you hear me? Where is your home, and what do you call yourself? You are not the man's wife, I know. We know as much as that, you see, so you may as well be frank."

"What is the charge against me?" she asked. She

spoke slowly, and her face was now set and stubborn. "Of what am I accused?"

Mr. Hornyold's face turned a brick red. He did not rule three parishes through three curates, reserving to himself only the disciplinary powers he was now exercising, to be thwarted by a run-the-country girl! A girl who, in spite of her looks, was, ten to one, no better than the imprudent wenches the overseers were continually bringing before him. He knew at least the company she kept. He raised his voice.

"I am not here to answer your questions!" he said, bending his brows; "but you mine! You mine!" he repeated, rapping the table sharply. "Do you hear? Now, you will at once tell me——"

He broke off. The clerk had touched his sleeve and was whispering in his ear. He frowned impatiently, but listened. And after a moment he shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "Tell her!"

The clerk, a shabby man with a scratch wig and a little glass ink-bottle at his buttonhole, raised his eyes, and looking at her over his glasses, spoke:

"You are not yet charged," he said, "but if you cannot give a satisfactory account of yourself you will be charged with receiving, harbouring, and assisting one, William Walterson the younger, otherwise Stewart, otherwise Malins, against whom indictments for various felonies and treason felonies have been found. And with aiding and abetting the escape of the said William Walterson, in whose company you have been found. And with being accessory after the fact to various felonies——"

"To murder!" said Mr. Hornyold, cutting him short, emphatically. "To murder! amongst other things. That is the charge, if you must know it. So now——" he rapped the table sharply, "answer at once, and the truth. What is your name? And where was your last place of abode?"

But Henrietta, if she were willing to answer, could not. At the sound of that dreadful word "murder!"—they hung people lightly, so lightly in those days!—the colour had fled

from her face. The darkness that had confused her a while before again hid all. She kept her seat, she even retained her erect posture; but the hands which she raised weakly before her, as if to ward off something, groped idly in the air.

Murder! No wonder that she lost consciousness for a moment, or that Hornyold, secretly relishing her beauty, thought that he had found the weapon that would soon bring her to her knees! Or that the little audience by the door, listening awe-struck, held their breath. The wonder was that only one of them judged from the girl's gesture that she was fainting. Only one acted. Mrs. Gilson stepped forward and shook her roughly by the shoulder.

"Words break no bones!" the landlady said without ceremony—and not without an angry look at the clerk who raised his pen as if he would interpose. "Don't you make a fool of yourself. But do you tell them what they want to know. And your friends will settle with them. Murder, indeed! Pack of boddles!"

"Very good advice," said the magistrate, smiling indulgently. "But——"

"But you must not interfere!" snapped the clerk—who kept the books of the Salutation in Ambleside and not of the Low Wood Inn.

"Haven't you sense to see the girl is fainting!" the landlady replied wrathfully.

"Oh, well——"

"I am better now," Henrietta said bravely. And she drew a deep breath. A little colour—induced perhaps by Hornyold's unsparing gaze—was coming back to her cheeks. "Would you—can I have a glass of water?" she murmured.

Mrs. Gilson was bustling to the door to give the order when it opened, and Mr. Bishop, who had gone to it a moment before, took in a glass of wine, and secretly pleased that he had anticipated the need, handed it to her. Mrs. Gilson took it with a grunt of distrust, and made the girl swallow it, while the magistrate waited and watched, and thought that he had never seen a young woman who was so handsome, pale or red, fainting or fierce. And so fresh! So admirably, as-

konishingly fresh for the companion of such a man. A good many thoughts of various kinds flitted through his mind as he watched her, marking now the luxuriance of her fair hair, now the white chin, small but firm, and now the faint, faint freckles that, like clots in cream, only added to the delicacy of her complexion. He waited without impatience until the girl had drunk the wine, and when he spoke it was in a tone approaching the paternal.

"Now, my dear," he said, "you are going to be a good girl and sensible, I am sure. We don't want to send you to prison to herd with people with whom, to judge from your appearance, you have not been wont to mix. And therefore we give you this opportunity—there's no need we should, you know—of telling us who you are and whence you come, and what you know; that if it appears that you have fallen into this man's company in ignorance, and not knowing what manner of man he was, we may prevent this charge appearing, and instead of committing you to Appleby, place you here or elsewhere under bond to appear. Which, in a case so serious as this, is not a course we could adopt were you not so very young, and," with a humorous look at the group by the door, "so very good-looking! So now be a good girl and don't be afraid, but tell me at once who you are, and where you joined this man."

"If I do not," Henrietta said, looking at him with clear eyes, "must I go to prison?"

"Appleby gaol," said the clerk, glancing over his glasses.

"Then you must send me there," she replied, a little faintly. "For I cannot tell you."

"Don't be a fool!" growled Mrs. Gilson in her ear.

"I cannot tell you," Henrietta repeated more firmly.

Mr. Hornyold stared. He was growing angry. He was not accustomed to be set at naught. After their fashion they all stared.

"Come, come, my dear," the runner remonstrated smoothly. "If you don't tell us, we shall think there's more behind."

She did not answer.

"And that being so, it's only a matter of time to learn

what it is," the runner continued cunningly. "Tell us now and save time, because we are sure to get to know. Young women, as pretty as you, are not hard to trace."

But she shook her head. And the face he called pretty was stubborn. The group by the door, marking for future gossip every particular of her appearance, the stuff of her riding-habit, the fineness of her linen, the set of her head, made certain that she was no common trollope. They wondered what would happen to her, and hoped, the more tender-hearted, that there would be no scene, and no hysterics to end it.

The clerk raised his pen in the air. "Understand," he said, "you will be remanded to Appleby gaol—it's no very comfortable place, I can tell you—and later, you will be brought up again and committed, I've very little doubt, to take your trial on these charges. If the principal offender be taken, as he is likely to be taken before the day is out, you'll be tried with him. But it is not necessary. Now do you understand?" he continued, speaking slowly. "And are you still determined to give no evidence—showing how you came to be with this man?"

Henrietta's eyes were full of trouble. She shivered.

"Where shall I be tried?" she muttered in an unsteady voice.

"Appleby," the clerk said curtly. "Or in His Majesty's Bench at Westminster! Now think, before it is too late."

"It is too late," she answered in a low tone, "I cannot help it now."

The magistrate leant forward. What a fool the girl was! If she went to Appleby he would see no more of her, save for an hour or two when she was brought up again before being committed. Whereas, if she spoke and they made her a witness, she might be lodged somewhere in the neighbourhood under surveillance. And she was so handsome and so young —the little fool!—he would not be sorry to see more of her.

"I give you a last chance," he said.

She shook her head.

The magistrate shrugged his shoulders

"Then make the committal out!" he said. "There's enough to justify it." It was some satisfaction to think that locked up with half a dozen sluts at Appleby she would soon be sorry for herself. "Make it out!" he repeated.

If the hysterics did not come now he was very much mistaken if they did not come later, when the gaol doors were shut on her. She was evidently of respectable condition; a curate's daughter, perhaps, figged out by the man who had deceived her, or a lady's lady, spoiled by her mistress, and taught ideas above her station. On such, the gaol, with its company and its hardships, fell severely. It would soon, he fancied, bring her to her senses.

The clerk dipped his pen in the ink, and after casting a last glance at the girl to see if she would still yield, began to write. She watched him with fascinated eyes, watched him in a kind of stupor. The thought throbbed loudly and more loudly in her head, "What will become of me? What will become of me?" Meanwhile the silence was broken only by the squeaking of the pen and a single angry "Lord's sakes!" which fell from the landlady. The others waited the end with whatever of pity, or interest, or greedy excitement came natural to them. They were within, and others were without; and they had a delicious sense of privilege. They would have much to tell, for one does not every day see a pretty girl, young, and tenderly nurtured, as this girl seemed to be, and a lady to the eye, committed to the common gaol on a charge of murder—murder, and treason felony, was it, they called it? Treason felony! That meant hanging, drawing, and quartering! Lord's sakes, indeed; poor thing, how would she bear it? And though it is likely that some among them—Mrs. Gilson for one—did not think it would come to this, there was a frown on the landlady's brow that would have done honour to the Lord Chancellor Eldon himself!

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN ANTHONY CLYNE

MR. BISHOP of Bow Street alone watched the clerk's pen with a look of doubt. He had his own views about the girl. But he did not interfere, and his discontent with the posture of affairs was only made clear when a knock came at the door. Then he was at the door, and had raised the latch before those who were nearest could open.

"Have you got him?" he asked eagerly, his head thrust into the passage.

Even Henrietta turned to catch the answer, her lips parting. Her breath seemed to stop. The clerk held his pen. The magistrate by a gesture exacted silence.

"No, but——"

"No?" the runner cried in chagrin.

"No!" The voice sounded something peremptory. "Certainly not. But I want to see—ahem!—yes, Mr. Hornyold. At once!"

Henrietta, at the first word of the answer, had turned again. She had turned so far that she now had her back full to the door, and her face to the farthest corner. But it was not the same Henrietta, nor the same face. She sat rigid, stiff, turned to stone; she was scarlet from hair to neck-ribbon. Her very ears burned, her shoulders burned. And her eyes were wild with insupportable shame. To be found thus! To be found thus, and by him! Better, far better the goal, and all it meant!

Meanwhile the magistrate, after a brief demur and a little whispering and the appearance of a paper with a name on it, rose. He went out. A moment later his clerk was summoned, and he went out. Bishop had gone out first of all. Those who

were left and who had nothing better to do than to stare at the girl's back, whispered together, or bade one another listen and hear what was afoot outside. Presently these were joined by one or two of the boldest in the passage, who muttered hurriedly what they knew, or sought information, or stared with double power at the girl's back. But Henrietta sat motionless, with the same hot blush on her cheeks and the same misery in her eyes.

Presently Mrs. Gilson was summoned and went out. The others, freed from the constraint of her presence, talked a little louder and more freely. And wonder grew. The two village constables, who remained and who felt themselves responsible, looked important, and one cried "Silence" a time or two, as if the court were sitting. The other explained the law, of which he knew as much as a Swedish turnip, on the subject of treason-felony; but mixing it up with the *Habeas Corpus* which was then suspended, he was tripped up by a neighbour before he could reach the minutiæ of the punishment—which otherwise must have had much interest for the prisoner.

At length the door opened, the other constable cried, "Silence! Silence in the court!" And there entered—the landlady.

The surprise of the little knot of people at the back of the room was great but short-lived.

Mrs. Gilson turned about and surveyed them with her arms akimbo and her lower lip thrust out. "You can all just go out!" she said. "And the sooner the better! And if ever I catch you—"—to the more successful of the constables, on whose feet her eye had that moment alighted—"up my stairs with those dirty clogs, Peter Harrison, I'll clout you! Now, off you go! Do you think I keep carpets for loons like you?"

"But—the prisoner?" gasped Peter, clutching at his fast-departing glory. "The prisoner, missus?"

"The goose!" the landlady retorted with indescribable scorn. "Go you down and see what the other ganders think of it. And leave me to mind my business! I'll see to the prisoner. And she saw them all out and closed the door.

When the room was clear she tapped Henrietta on the shoulder. "There's no gaol for you," she said bluntly. "Though it is not yourself you've got to thank for it. They've put you in my charge and you're to stay here, and I'm to answer for you. So you'll just say straight out if you'll stay, or if you'll run."

Had the girl burst into tears the landlady had found it reasonable. Instead, "Where is he?" Henrietta whispered. She did not even turn her head.

"Didn't you hear," Mrs. Gilson retorted, "that he had not been taken?"

"I mean—I mean——"

"Ah!" Mrs. Gilson exclaimed, enlightened. "You mean the gentleman that was here, and spoke for you? Yes, you are right, it's him you've to thank. Well, he's gone. He's gone to Whitehaven, but he'll see you to-morrow."

Henrietta sighed.

"In the meantime," Mrs. Gilson continued, "you'll give me your word you'll not run. Gilson is bound for you in fifty pounds to show you when you're wanted. And as fifty pounds is fifty pounds, and a mint of money, I'd as soon turn the key on you as not. Girls that run once, run easy," the landlady added severely.

"I will not run away," Henrietta said meekly—more meekly perhaps than she had ever spoken in her life. "And—and I am much obliged to you, and thankful to you." in a very small voice. "Will you please to let me go to my room and you can lock me in?"

She had risen from her seat, and though she did not turn to the landlady, she stole, shamed and askance, a look at her. Her lip trembled, her head hung. And Mrs. Gilson, on her side, seemed for a moment on the verge of some unwonted demonstration; she stood awkward and large, and perhaps from sheer clumsiness avoided even while she appeared to invite the other's look. But nothing happened until the two passed out, Henrietta first, like a prisoner, and Mrs. Gilson stiffly following.

Then there were half a dozen persons waiting to stare in

ne passage, and the way Mrs. Gilson's tongue fell loose was warning. In two seconds, only one held her ground : the ame dark girl with the gipsy-like features whose mocking mile had annoyed Henrietta as she dressed that morning. lh, me! What ages ago that morning seemed!

To judge from Mrs. Gilson's indignation the girl was the st who should have stood.

"Don't you black-look me!" the landlady cried. "But ack! D'you hear, impudence? pack! Or not one drop f milk do I take from your old skinflint of a father! And e'll drub you finely, if he's not too old and silly—till you smile n the other side of your face! I'd like to know what's taken ou to-day to push yourself among your betters!"

"No harm," the girl muttered. She had retreated, scowling, alf-way down the stairs.

"And no good, either!" the landlady retorted. "Get you one, or I'll make your ears ring after another fashion!"

Henrietta heard no more. She had shrunk from the proar and gone quickly in her room. With a bursting heart nd a new humility she drew the key from the wards of the ock and set it on the outside ; hoping—though the hope was lender—to avoid further words with the landlady. The hope ame nearer fulfilment, however, than she expected, for Mrs. ilson, after panting upstairs, only cried through the door hat she would send up her supper, and then went down gain—perhaps with a view to catching Bess Hinkson in a resh trespass.

Bess was gone, however. But adventures are for the rave, and not ten minutes passed before the landlady was t issue with a fresh adversary. She found the coach-office ull, so full that it overflowed into the hall. Modest Ann, alled this way and that, had need of four hands to meet the demands made upon her ; so furious were the calls for the emons and rum, and Old Geneva, the grateful perfume of which greeted Mrs. Gilson as she descended. Alas, something lse greeted her : and that was a voice, never a favourite with her, but now raised in accents particularly distasteful. yson, the Troutbeck apothecary—a flashy, hard-faced young

man in pepper-and-salt, and Bedford cords—had seized the command and the ear of the company, and was roasting Long Tom Gilson upon his own hearth.

"Not know who she is?" he was saying in the bullying tone which made him hated of the pauper class. "You don't ask me to believe that, Tom. Come! Come!"

"It's what I say," Gilson answered.

He sat opposite the other, his hands on his knees, his face red and sulky. He did not like to be baited.

"And you go bail for her?" Tyson cried. "You have gone bail for her?"

"Well."

"And don't know her name?"

"Well—no."

The doctor sat back in his chair, his glass in his hand, and looked round for approbation.

"Well, gentlemen," he said. "What do you think of that for a dalesman?"

"Well, it wasn't long-headed, Tom," said one unwillingly. "Not to call long-headed, so to speak," with north-country caution. "I'd not go bail myself, not for nobody I'd not know."

"No," several agreed. "No, no!"

"No, but——"

"But what, Tom, what?" the doctor asked, waiting in his positive fashion for the other to plunge deeper into the mire.

"Captain Clyne, that I do know," Gilson continued, "it was he said 'Do it!' And he said something to the rector, I don't doubt, for he was agreeable."

"But he did not go bail for her?" the apothecary suggested maliciously.

"No," Tom answered, breathing hard. "But for reason, she was not there, but here. Anyway," he continued, somewhat anxious to shift the subject, "he said it and I done it, and I'd do it again for Captain Clyne. I tell you he's not a man as it's easy to say no to, Mr. Tyson. As these radicals i' Lancashire ha' found out, 'od rot em! He's that active among 'em, he's never a letter, I'm told, but has a coffin drawn

rn it, and yeomanry in his house down beyond both day and light, I hear!"

"I heard," said one, "in Cartmel market he was to be married next week."

"Ay," said the doctor jocosely, "but not to the young lady as Tom is bail for! I tell you, Tom, he's been making a fool of you just to keep this bit of evidence against the radicals in his hands."

"Why not send her to Appleby gaol, then?" Tom retorted, with some show of sense.

"Because he knows you'll cosset her here, and he thinks to loose her tongue that way! They can gaol her after, if this don't answer."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Ay, while you run the risk! If it's not that, what's he doing here?"

"Why should he not be here?" Gilson asked slowly. "Hasn't he the old house in Furness, not two miles from Newby Bridge! And his mother a Furness woman. I do hear that the boy's to be brought there for safety till the shires are quieter. And may be it's that brings Captain Anthony here."

"But what has that to do with the young woman you're going bail for?" the doctor retorted. "Go bail, Tom, for a wench you don't know, and that'll jump the moon one of these fine nights! I tell you, man, I never heard the like! Never! Go bail for a girl you don't know!"

"And I tell you," cried a voice that made the glasses ring, "I have heard the like! And I'll give you the man, my lad!" And Mrs. Gilson, putting aside the two who blocked the doorway, confronted the offending Tyson with a look comparable only to that of Dr. Keate of Eton fame when he rolled up his sleeves. "I'll give you the name, my lad!" she repeated.

"Well," the doctor answered, though he was manifestly taken aback, "you must confess, Mrs. Gilson——"

"Nay, I'll confess nothing!" the landlady retorted. "What need, when you're the man. Not give bail for a

woman you don't know? Much you knew of Madge Peters when you made her your wife! And wasn't that going bail for her? Ay, and bail that you'll find it hard to get out of, my man, though you may wish to! For the matter of that, it's small blame to her, whatever comes of it," Mrs. Gilson continued, setting her arms akimbo, "if all I hear of your goings-on is true! What do you think she's doing, ill and sick at home, while you're hanging about old Hinkson's! Ay, you may look black, but tell me what Bess Hinkson's doing about my place all this day! I never saw her here twice in a day in all my life, and——"

"What do you mean?" Tyson cried violently. To hear a thing which he thought no one suspected brought up thus before a roomful of men! He looked black as thunder at his accuser.

"I mean no harm of your wife," the terrible landlady answered. Something—perhaps this roasting of her husband on his own hearth—had roused her beyond the ordinary. "None, my gentleman, and I know none. But if you want no harm said of her, show yourself a bit less at Hinkson's. And a bit less in my house. And a bit more in your own! And the harm will be less likely to happen!"

"I'll never cross your doorstep again!" Tyson roared.

And stumbling to his feet he cast off rudely one or two who in their well meaning would have stayed him. He made truculently for the door, but he was not to escape without further collision. On the threshold he ran plump against a person who was entering, cursed the newcomer heartily, and without a look pushed violently by him, and was gone.

He neither cared nor saw who it was whom he had jostled. But the company saw, and some rose to their feet in consternation, while others carried their hands to their heads. There was an involuntary movement of respect which the newcomer acknowledged by touching his hat. He had the air of one who knew how to behave to his inferiors, but the air, also, of one who never forgot that they were his inferiors.

"Your friend seems in a hurry," he said. His face was not a face that easily betrayed emotion, but he looked tired.

"Beg your honour's pardon, I am sure," Gilson answered. 'Something's put him out, and he did not see you, sir."

Mrs. Gilson muttered that a pig could have seen. But her words were lost in the respectful murmur which made the company sharers in the landlord's apology.

Not that for the most part they knew the strange gentleman. But there is a habit of authority which once gained becomes a part of the man. And Anthony Clyne had this. He retained wherever he went some shadow of the quarter-deck manner. He had served under Nelson, and under Exmouth; but he had resisted, as a glance at his neat, trim figure proved, that coarsening influence which spoiled for Pall Mall too many of the sea-dogs of the great war. Like his famous leader, he had left an arm in the cockpit; and the empty sleeve which he wore pinned to the lappel of his coat added, if possible, to the dignity of the upright carriage and the clean, shaven face. The death of his elder brother had given him the family place, a seat in the House, a chair at White's, and an income handsome for his day. And he looked all this and more. So that such a company as now eyed him with respect judged him a very perfect gentleman, if a little distant.

But from Clyne Old Hall, where he lived, he could see on the horizon the smoke of toiling cities; and in those cities there were hundreds who hated his cold proud face, and thousands who cursed his name. Not that he was a bad man or a tyrant, or himself ground the faces of the poor. But discipline was his watchword, and reform his bugbear. To palter with reform, to listen to a word about the rights of the masses, was to his mind to parley with anarchy. That governors and governed could be the same appeared to his mind as absurd as that His Majesty's ships could be commanded from the forecastle. All for the people and nothing by the people was his political maxim, and one amply meeting, as he believed, all eventualities. Lately he had had it carved on a mantelpiece, and the prattle of his only child, as the club-footed boy spelled it out syllable by syllable, was music to his ears.

Whoever wavered, therefore, whoever gave to the violence

of those times, he stood firm. And he made others stand. It was his honest belief that a little timely severity—in other words, a whiff of grape-shot—would have nipped the French Revolution in the bud; and while he owned that the lower orders were suffering and times were bad, that bread was dear and work wanting, he was for quelling the least disorder with the utmost rigour of the law.

Such was the man who accepted with a curt nod Tom Gilson's apology. Then, "Have you a room ready?" he asked.

"The fire is still burning in Mr. Rogers's room," Mrs. Gilson answered, smoothing at once her apron and her brow. "And it'll not be used again to-night. But I thought that you had gone on, sir, to Whitehaven."

"I shall go on to-morrow," he answered, frowning slightly.

"I'll show your honour the way," Tom Gilson said.

"Very good," he answered. "And dinner, ma'am, as soon as possible."

"To be sure, sir." And "this way, your honour." And taking two candles Gilson went out before Captain Clyne, and with greater ceremony than would be used in these days, lighted him along the passage and up the stairs to Mr. Rogers's room in the south wing.

The fire had sunk somewhat low, but the room which had witnessed so many emotions in the last twenty-four hours made no sign. The table had been cleared. The glass fronts of the cupboards shone dully; only a chair or two stood here or there out of place. That was all. But had Henrietta, when she descended to breakfast that morning, foreseen who would fill her chair before night, who would dine at her table and brood with stern unseeing eyes on the black-framed prints, for whom the pale-faced clock would tick off depressing seconds, what—what would she have thought? And how would she have faced her future?

CHAPTER VIII

STARVECROW FARM

THE company at Mrs. Gilson's, impressed by the appearance of a gentleman of Captain Clyne's position, scarce gave a second thought to the doctor's retreat. But to Tyson, striding homewards through the mud and darkness, the insult he had suffered and the feeble part he had played filled the world. For him the inn-parlour still cackled at his expense. He saw himself the butt of the evening, the butt of many evenings. He was a vain, ill-conditioned man, who among choice spirits would have boasted of his philandering. But not the less he hated to be brought to book before those whom he deemed his inferiors. He could not deny that the landlady had trounced him, and black bile whelmed all his better feelings as he climbed the steep track behind the inn. "D——d shrew!" he growled, "D——d shrew!" and breathing hard, as much in rage as with exertion, he stood an instant to look back and shake his fist before he plunged into the darkness of the wooded dell through which the path ascended.

Two or three faint lights marked the position of the inn a couple of fields below him. Beyond it the pale surface of the lake reflected a dim radiance, bestowed on it through some rift in the clouds invisible from where he stood. A far-away dog barked, a curlew screamed on the hill above him, the steady fall of a pair of oars in the rowlocks rose from the lake. The immensity of the night closed all in; and on the thoughtful might have laid a burden of melancholy.

But Tyson thought of his wrongs, not of the night, and with a curse he turned and plunged into the wood, following

a path impossible for a stranger. As it was he stumbled over roots, the saplings whipped him smartly, a low bough struck off his hat, and when he came to the stream which whirled through the bottom of the dingle he had much ado to find the plank bridge. But at length he emerged from the wood, gained the road, and mounted the steep shoulder that divided the Low Wood hamlet from the vale of Troutbeck.

Where his road topped the ridge the gaunt outline of a tall, narrow building rose in the gloom. It resembled a sentry-box commanding either valley. It was set back some twenty paces from the road with half a dozen ragged fir trees intervening; and on its lower side—but the night hid them—some mean farm-buildings clung to the steep. With the wind soughing among the firs and rustling through the scanty grass, the place on that bleak shoulder seemed lonely even at night. But in the day its ugliness and bareness were a proverb. They called it "Starvecrow Farm."

Nevertheless, Tyson paused at the gate, and with an irresolute oath looked over it.

"Cursed shrew!" he said, for the third time. "What business is it of hers if I choose to amuse myself?"

And with his heart hardened, he flung the gate wide, and entered. He had not gone two paces before he leapt back, startled by the fierce snarl of a dog, that, unseen, flung itself to the end of its chain. Disappointed in its spring it began to bay.

The doctor's fright was only momentary.

Then "What, Turk!" he cried. "What are you doing here? What the blazes are you doing here? Down, you brute, down!"

The dog knew his voice, ceased to bark, and began to whimper. Tyson entered, and assured that the watch-dog knew him, kicked it brutally from his path. Then he groped his way between the trees, stumbled down three broken steps at the corner of the house, and passing round the building reached the door which was on the farther side from the road. He tried it, but it was fastened. He knocked on it.

A slip-shod foot dragged across a stone floor, a high cracked voice asked, "Who is there."

"I! Tyson!" the doctor answered impatiently. "Who should it be at this hour?"

"Is't you, doctor?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Who's wi' ye?"

"No one, you old fool! Who should there be?"

A key creaked in the lock, and the great bar was withdrawn; but slowly, as it seemed to the apothecary, and reluctantly He entered and the door was barred behind him.

"Where's Bess?" he asked.

The old stooping figure that had admitted him replied that he was somewheres about, somewheres about. After which, strangely clad in a kind of bedgown and nightcap, it trailed back to the settle beside the turf and wood fire, which furnished both light and warmth. The fire, indeed, was the one generous thing the room contained. All else was sordid and pinched and mean. The once-whited walls were stained, the rafters were smoked in a dozen places, the long dresser—for the room was large, though low—was cracked and ill-furnished, a brick supported one leg of the table. Even in the deep hearth-place, where was such comfort as the place could boast, a couple of logs served for stools and a frowsy blanket gave a squalid look to the settle.

Tyson stood on the hearth with his back to the fire, and eyed the room with a scowl of disgust. The old man, bent double over a stick which he was notching, breathed loudly and laboriously.

"What folly is this about the dog?" Tyson asked contemptuously.

The old man looked up, cunning in his eyes.

"Ask her," he said.

"Eh?"

The miser bending over his task seemed to be taken with a fit of silent laughter.

"It's the still sow sups the brose," he said. "And I'm still! I'm still."

"What are you doing?" Tyson growled.

"Nothing much! Nothing much! You've not," looking up with greed in his eyes, "an old letter-back to spare?"

Tyson seldom came to the house unfurnished with one. He had long known that Hinkson belonged to the class of misers, who, if they can get a thing for nothing, are as well pleased with a scrap of paper, a length of string, or a mouldy crust, as with a crown-piece. The poor land about the house, which with difficulty supported three or four cows, on the produce of which the Hinksons lived, might at the cost of some labour and a little money have been made profitable. But labour and money were withheld. And Tyson often doubted if the miser's store was as large as rumour had it, or even if there was a store at all.

"Not that," he would add, "large or small, some one won't cut his throat for it one day!"

He produced the old letter, and after showing it, held it behind him.

"What of the dog now?" he said.

"Na, na, I'll not speak for that!"

"Then you won't have it!"

But the old fellow only cackled superior. "What's—what's—a pound-note a week? Is't four pound a month?"

"Ay!" the doctor answered. "It is. That's money, my lad!"

"Ay!"

The old man hugged himself, and rocked to and fro in an ecstasy.

"That's money! And four pound a month," he consulted the stick he was notching, "is forty-eight pound a year?"

"And four to it," Tyson answered. "Who's paying you that?"

"Na, na!"

"And what's it to do with the dog?"

Hinkson looked knavish but frightened.

"Hist!" he said. "Here's Bess. I'd use to wallop her, but now——"

"She wallops you," the visitor muttered. "That's the ticket, I expect."

The girl entered by the narrow staircase door and nodded to him coolly.

"I supposed it was you," she said slightingly.

And for the hundredth or two-hundredth time he felt with rage that he was in the presence of a stronger nature than his own. He could treat the old man, whose greed had survived his other passions, and almost his faculties, pretty much as he pleased. But though he had sauntered through the gate a score of times with his mind made up to treat Bess as he had treated more than one village girl who pleased him, he had never recrossed the threshold without a sense not only of defeat, but of inferiority. He came to strut, he remained to kneel.

He fought against that feeling now, calling his temper to his aid.

"What folly is this about the dog?" he said curtly.

"Father thinks," she replied demurely, "that if thieves come it can be heard better at the gate."

"Heard? I should think it could be heard in Bowness!"

"Just so."

"But your father——"

"Father!" sharply, "go to bed!" And then to the visitor, "Give him a ha'penny," she muttered. "He won't go without!"

"But I don't care——"

"I don't care either—which of you goes!" she retorted. "But one of you goes."

Sullenly he produced a copper and put it in the old man's quivering hand—not for the first time by several. Hinkson tripped it! and closing his hand upon it as if he feared it would be taken from him, he hobbled away, and disappeared behind the dingy hangings of the box-bed.

"And now what's the mystery?" Tyson asked, seating himself on one of the stools.

"There is none," she answered, standing before him where the firelight fell on her insolent face and gipsy beauty. "Call

it a whim if you like. Perhaps I don't want my lads to come in till I've raddled my cheeks! Or perhaps"—flippantly—"Oh, any perhaps you like!"

"I know no lad you have but me," he said.

"I don't know one," she answered, seating herself on the settle, and bending forward with her elbows on her knees and her face between her hands. It was a common pose with her. "When I've a lad I want a man!" she continued, "a man!"

"Don't you call me a man?" he answered, his eyes taking their fill of her face.

"Of a sort," she rejoined disdainfully. "Of a sort. Good enough for here. But I shan't live all my life here! D'you ever think what a God-forsaken corner this is, Tyson? Why, man, we are like mice in a dark cupboard, and know as much of the world!"

"What's the world to us?" he asked. Her words and her ways were often a little beyond him.

"That's it!" she answered, in a tone of contemptuous raillery. "What's the world to us? We are here and not there. We must curtsey to parson and bob to curate, and mind our manners with the overseers! We must be proud if Madam inquires after our conduct, but we must not fancy that we are the same flesh and blood as she is! Ah, when I meet her," with sudden passion, "and she looks at me to see if I am clean, I—do you know what I think of? Do you know what I dream of? Do you know what I hope"—she snapped her strong white teeth together—"ay, hope to see?"

"What?"

'What they saw twenty years ago in France—her white neck under the knife! That was what happened to her and her like there, I'm told, and I wish it could happen here! And I'd knit, as girls knitted there, and count the heads that fell into the baskets. When that time comes Madam won't look to see if I am clean!"

He looked at her uncomfortably. He did not understand her.

"How the devil do you come to know these things?" he exclaimed. It was not the first time she had opened to him

in this strain—not the first by several. And the sharp edge was gone from his astonishment. But she was not the less a riddle to him and a perplexity—a Sphinx, at once alluring and terrifying. "Who told you of them? What makes you think of them?" he repeated.

"Do you never think of them?" she retorted, leaning forward and fixing her eyes on his. "Do you never wonder why all the good things are for a few, and for the rest—a crust! Why the rector dines at the squire's table and you dine in the steward's room? Why the parson gives you a finger and thinks he stoops? And his ladies treat you as if you were dirt—only the 'pothecary! Why, you are in one class and they in another till the end of time?"

"D——n them!" he muttered, his face a dull red. She knew how to touch him on the raw.

"Do you never think of those things?" she asked.

"Well," he said, taking her up sullenly, "if I do?"

She rocked herself back on the settle and looked across at him out of half-closed eyes.

"Then—if you do think," she answered slowly, "it is to be seen if you are a man."

"A man?"

"Ay, a man! A man! For if you think of these things, if you stand face to face with them, and do nothing, you are no man. And no lad for me!" lightly. "You are well matched as it is then. Just a match and no more for your white-faced, helpless dumpling of a wife!"

"It is all very well," he muttered, "to talk!"

"Ay, but presently we shall do as well as talk. Out in the world they are doing now! They are beginning to do. But here—what do you know in this cupboard? No more than the mice."

"Fine talk!" he retorted, stung by her contempt. "But you talk without knowing. There have been parsons and squires from the beginning, and there will be parsons and squires to the end. You may talk until you are black in the face, Bess, but you won't alter that!"

"Ay, talk!" she retorted drily. "You may talk. But

if you do—as they did in France twenty years gone. Where are their squires and parsons now? The end came quick enough there, when it came."

"I don't know much about that," he growled.

"Ay, but I do."

"But how the devil do you?" he answered, in some irritation, but more wonder. "How do you?" And he looked round the bare, sordid kitchen. The fire shooting warm tongues up the black cavernous chimney made the one spot of comfort that was visible.

"Never you mind!" she answered, with a mysterious and tantalising smile. "I do. And by-and-by, if we've the spirit of a mouse, things will happen here! Down yonder—I know—there are thousands and tens of thousands starving, and stacks burning, and mobs marching, and men drilling, and more things happening than you dream of! And all that means that by-and-by I shall be knitting while Madame and Miss and that proud-faced, slim-necked chit at the inn, who faced us all down to-day——"

"Why," he struck in, in fresh surprise, "what has she done to you now?"

"That's my business, never you mind! Only, by-and-by, they will all smile on the wrong side of their face!"

He stared morosely into the fire. And she watched him, her long lashes veiling a sly and impish amusement. If he dreamed that she loved him, if he fancied her victim of his bow and spear he strangely, most strangely misread her. And a sudden turn, a single quick glance should have informed him. For as the flames by turns lit her face and left it to darkness, they wrought it to many expressions; but never to kindness.

"There's many I'd like to see brought down a piece," he muttered at last. "Many, many. And I'm as fond of my share of good things as most. But it's all talk, there's nought to be done! Nor ever will be! There have been parsons and squires from the beginning."

"Would you do it," she asked softly, "if there were anything to be done?"

"Try me."

"I doubt it. And that's why you are no lad for me."

He rose to his feet in a temper at that. He turned his back on the fire.

"What's the use of getting on this every time?" he cried. And he took up his hat. "I'm weary of it. I'm off. I don't know that I shall come back again. What's the use?" with a side-long glance at her dark, handsome face and the curving figure which the firelight threw into prominence.

"If there were anything to do," she asked, as if he had never spoken, never answered the question, "would you do it?" and she smiled at him, her head thrown back, her red lips parted, her eyes tempting.

"You know I would if——" he paused.

"If there was some one to be won by it?"

He nodded, his eyes kindling.

"Well——"

No more. For as she spoke the word, and he bent forward, something heavy fell on the floor overhead; and she sat up straight. Her eyes, grown suddenly hard and small, perhaps with fright, held Tyson's eyes.

"What's that?" he cried, frowning suspiciously. "There's nobody upstairs?"

"Father's in bed," she said. She held up a finger for silence.

"And there's nobody else in the house?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Who should there be?" she said. "It's the cat, I suppose."

"You'd better let me see," he rejoined. And he took a step towards the staircase door.

"No need," she answered listlessly, after listening anew. "I'm not afraid. The cat is not here; it must have been the cat. I'll go up when you are gone, and see."

"It's not safe," he grumbled, still inclined to go. "You two alone here, and the old man said to be as rich as a lord!"

"Ay, said to be," she answered, smiling. "As you said you were going ten minutes ago, and you are not gone yet.

But——" she rose with a yawn, partly real and partly forced, "you must go now, my lad."

"But why?" he answered. "When we were just beginning to understand one another."

"Why?" she answered pertly. "Because father wants to sleep. Because your wife will scratch my eyes out if you don't. Because I am not going to say another word to-night—whatever I may say to-morrow. And because it's my will, my lad. That's all."

He muttered his discontent, swinging his hat in his hand, and making eyes at her. But she kept him at arm's length, and after a moment's argument she drove him to the door.

"All the same," he said, when he stood outside, "you had better let me look upstairs."

But she laughed.

"I dare say you'd like it!" she said. And she shut the door in his face and he heard the great bar that secured it shoot into its socket in the thickness of the wall. In a temper not much better than that in which he had left the inn, he groped his way round the house, and up the three steps at the corner of the building. He swore at the dog that it might know who came, and so passed into the road. Once he looked back at the house, but all was dark. The windows looked the other way.

CHAPTER IX

PUNISHMENT

ANTHONY CLYNE came to a stand before her, and lifted his hat.

"I understand," he said, without letting his eyes meet hers—he was stiffness itself, but perhaps he too had his emotions—"that you preferred to see me here rather than indoors?"

"Yes," Henrietta answered; and the girl thanked Heaven that though the beating of her heart had nearly choked her a moment before, her tone was as hard and uncompromising as his. He could not guess, he never should guess, what strain she put on nerve and will that she might not quail before him; nor how often, with her quivering face hidden in the pillow, she had told herself, before rising, that it was for once only, once only, and that then she need never see again the man she had wronged.

"I do not know," he continued slowly, "whether you have anything to say?"

"Nothing," she answered. They were standing on the Ambleside road, a short furlong from the inn. Leafless trees climbed the hill-side above them; and a rough slope unfenced and strewn with boulders and dying bracken ran down from their feet to the lake.

"Then," he rejoined, with a scarcely perceptible hardening of the mouth, "I had best say as briefly as possible what I am come to say."

"If you please," she answered. Hitherto she had faced him. Now she averted her eyes ever so slightly—hitherto she had faced him regally. Now she placed herself so that she looked across the water that gleamed pale under the morning mist.

Yet, even with her eyes turned from him, he did not find it quite easy to say what he must say. And for a few seconds he was silent. At last "I do not wish to upbraid you," he began in a voice somewhat lower in tone. "You have done a very foolish and a very wicked, wicked thing, and one which cannot be undone in the eyes of the world. That is for all to see. You have left your home and your friends and your family under circumstances——"

She turned her full face to him suddenly.

"Have they," she said, "empowered you to speak to me?"

"Yes."

"They do not wish to see me themselves?"

"No."

"Nor perhaps—wish me to return to them?"

"No."

She nodded as she looked away again—in sheer defiance, he supposed. He did not guess that she did it to mask the irrepressible shiver which the news caused her.

He thought her on the contrary utterly unrepentant, and it hardened him to speak more austerely, to give his feelings freer vent.

"Had you done this thing with a gentleman," he said, "there had been, however heartless and foolish the act, some hope that the matter might be set straight! And some excuse for yourself; since a man of our class might have dazzled you by the possession of qualities which the person you chose could not have. But an elopement with a needy adventurer, without breeding, parts, or honesty—a criminal, and wedded already——"

"If he were not wedded already," she said, "I had been with him now!"

His face grew a shade more severe, but otherwise he did not heed the taunt.

"Such a—an act," he said, "unfits you in your brother's eyes to return to his home"—he paused an instant—"or to the family you have disgraced. I am bound—I have no option, to tell you this."

"You say it as from them?"

"I do. I have said indeed less than they bade me say. And not more, I believe on my honour, than the occasion requires. A young gentlewoman," he continued bitterly, "brought up in the country with every care, sheltered from every temptation, with friends, with a home, with every comfort and luxury, and about to be married to a gentleman in her own rank in life, meets secretly, clandestinely, shamefully a man, the lowest of the low, on a par in refinement with her own servants, but less worthy! She deceives with him her friends, her family, her relatives! If"—with some emotion—"I have overstated one of these things, God forgive me!"

"Pray go on!" she said, with her face averted. And thinking that she was utterly hardened, utterly without heart, thinking that her outward calm spelled callousness, and that she felt nothing, he did continue.

"Can she," he said, "who has been so deceitful herself, complain if the man deceives her? She has chosen a worthless creature before her family and her friends! Is she not rightly served if he treats her after his own nature and her example? If, after stooping to the lawless level of such a poor thing, she finds herself involved in his penalties, and her name a scandal and a shame to her family!"

"Is that all?" she asked. But not a quiver of the voice, not a tremor of the shoulders betrayed what she was feeling, what she suffered, how fiercely the brand was burning into her soul.

"That is all they bade me say," he replied in a calmer and more gentle tone. "And that they would make arrangements —such arrangements as may be possible—for your future. But they would not take you back."

"And now—what on your own account?" she asked, almost flippantly. "Something, I suppose?"

"Yes," he said, answering her slowly, and with a steady look of condemnation. For in all honesty the girl's attitude shocked and astonished him. "I have something to say on my own account. But it is difficult to say it."

She turned to him and raised her eyebrows.

"Really!" she said. "You seem to speak so easily."

He did not remark how white, even against the pale shimmer of the lake, was the face that mocked him; and her heartlessness seemed dreadful to him.

"I wish," he said, "to say only one thing on my own account."

"There is only one thing you must not say," she retorted, turning on him without warning and speaking with concentrated passion. "I have been, it may be, as foolish as you say. I am only nineteen. I may have been, I don't know about that, very wicked—as wicked as you say. And what I have done in my folly and in my—you call it wickedness—may be a disgrace to my family. But I have done nothing, nothing, sir,"—she raised her head proudly—"to disgrace myself personally. Do you believe that?"

And then he did notice how white she was.

"If you tell me that, I do believe it," he said gravely.

"You must believe it," she rejoined with sudden vehemence. "Or you wrong me more cruelly than I have wronged you!"

"I do believe it," he said, conquered for the time by a new emotion.

"Then now I will hear you," she answered, her tone sinking again. "I will hear what you wish to say. Not that it will bend me. I have injured you. I own it, and I am sorry for it on your account. On my own, I am unhappy, but I had been more unhappy had I married you. You have been frank, let me be frank," she continued, her eyes alight, her tone almost imperious. "You sought not a wife, but a mother for your child! A woman a little better bred than a nurse, to whom you could entrust the one being, the only being you love, with less chance of its contamination"—she laughed icily—"by the lower orders! If you had any other motive in choosing me it was that I was your second cousin, of your own respectable family, and you did not derogate. But you forgot that I was young and a woman, as you were a man. You said no word of love to me, you begged for no favour; when you entered a room, you sought my eye no more than another's, you had no more softness for me than for another! If you courted me at all it was before others, and if you talked

to me at all it was from the height of wise dullness, and about things I did not understand and things I hated! Until"—viciously—"at last I hated you! What could be more natural? What did you expect?"

A little colour had stolen into his face under the lash of her reproaches. He tried to seem indifferent, but he could not. His tone was forced and constrained when he answered, "You have strange ideas."

"And you have but two!" she riposted: "politics and your boy! I cared," with concentrated bitterness, "for neither!"

That stung him to anger and retort. "I can imagine it," he said. "Your likings appear to be on a different plane."

"They are at least not confined to fifty families!" she rejoined. "I do not think myself divine," she continued with feverish irony, "and all below me clay! I do not think because I and all about me are dull and stupid that all the world is dull and stupid, talking eternally about"—and she deliberately mocked his tone—"'the license of the press!' and 'the imminence of anarchy!' To talk," with supreme scorn, "of the license of the press and the imminence of anarchy to a girl of nineteen! It was at least to make the way very smooth for another!"

He looked at her in silence, frowning. Her frankness was an outrage to his dignity; and he, of all men, loved his dignity. But it surprised him at least as much as it shocked him. He remembered the girl sometimes silly, sometimes demure, to whom he had cast the handkerchief; and he had not been more astonished if a sheep had stood up and barked at him. He was here, prepared to meet a frightened, weeping, shame-faced child, imploring pardon, imploring mediation; and he found this! He was here to upbraid and she scolded him. She marked with unerring eye the joints in his armour, and with her venomous woman's tongue she planted darts that he knew would rankle—rankle long after she was gone and he was alone. And a faint glimpse of the truth broke on him. Was it possible that he had misread the girl whom he had deemed characterless, when she was not shy? Was it possible

that he had under-valued her and slighted her? Was it possible that, while he had been judging her and talking down to her, she had been judging him and laughing in her sleeve?

The thought was not pleasant to a proud nature. And there was another thing he had to weigh. If she were so different in fact from the conception he had formed of her, the course which had occurred to him as the best, and which he was going to propose for her, might not be the best.

But he put that from him. At times a name for firmness compels a man to obstinacy. It was so now. He set his jaw more stiffly, and "Will you hear me now?" he asked.

"If there is anything more to be said," she replied. She spoke wearily over her shoulder.

"I think there is," he rejoined stubbornly. "One thing. It will not keep you long. It refers to your future. There is a course which I think may be taken and may be advantageous to you."

"If," she cried impetuously, "it is to take me back to those——"

"On the contrary," he replied. He was not unwilling to wound one who had shown herself so unexpectedly capable of offence. "That is quite past," he continued. "There is no longer any question of that. The course I suggest is not without its disadvantages. It may not, at first sight, be more acceptable to you than a return to your home. But I trust you have learnt a lesson, and will now be guided." After saying which he coughed and hesitated, and at length, after twice pulling up his cravat, "I think," he said, "the matter is somewhat delicate—I think that I had better write what I have in my mind."

Under the dead weight of depression which had succeeded to passion, curiosity stirred faintly in her. But—

"As you please," she said.

"The more," he continued stiffly, "as in the immediate present there is nothing to be done. And therefore there is no haste. Until this"—he made a wry face, the thing was so hateful to him—"this inquiry is at an end, and you are free to leave, nothing but preliminaries can be dealt with;

those settled, however, I think there should be no delay. But you shall hear from me within the week."

"Very well." And after a slight pause, "That is all?"

"That is all, I think."

But he did not go. And she continued to stand with her shoulder turned towards him. He was a man of strong prejudices, and the habit of command had rendered him in some degree callous. But he was neither unkind by nature, nor, in spite of the story which Walterson had told of him, inhuman in practice. And to leave a young girl thus, to leave her without a word of leave-taking or regret, seemed even to him, now it came to the point, barbarous. The road stretched lonely on either side of them, the woods were brown and sad and almost leafless, the lake below them mirrored the unchanging grey above, or lost itself in dreary mist. And he remembered her in surroundings so different! He remembered how she had been reared, by whom encircled, amid what plenitude! And though he did not guess that the slender figure standing thus mute and forlorn would haunt him by night and by day for weeks to come, and harry and torment him with dumb reproaches—he still had not the heart to go without one gentler word.

And so "No, there is one thing," he said, his voice shaking very slightly, "I would like to add—I would like you to know. It is that after next week I shall be at Rysby in Cartmel—Rysby Hall—for about a month. It is not more than five miles from the foot of the lake, and if you are still there and need advice——"

"Thank you."

"——or help, I would like you to know that I am there."

"That I may apply to you?" she said without turning her head.

He could not tell whether at last there were tears in her voice, or whether she were merely drawing him on to flout him.

"I meant that," he said coldly.

"Thank you."

Certainly there was a queer sound in her voice.

He paused awkwardly.

"There is nothing more, I think?" he said.

"Nothing, thank you."

"Very well," he returned. "Then you will hear from me upon the matter I mentioned—in a day or two. Good-bye."

He waited for her answer, but she did not speak, and he went then—awkwardly; feeling himself, in spite of his arguments, in spite of his anger, in spite of the wrong which she had done him, and the disgrace which she had brought on his name—feeling himself something of a cur. She was little more than a child, little more than a child; and he had not understood her! Even now he had no notion how often that plea would ring in his ears, and harass him and keep him wakeful.

And Henrietta? She had told herself before the interview that with it the worst would be over. But as she heard his footsteps pass slowly away, down the road, and grow fainter and fainter, the pride that had supported her under his eyes sank. A sense of her loneliness, so cruel that it wrung her heart, so cruel that she could have run after him and begged him to punish her, to punish her as he pleased, if he would not leave her, gripped her throat and brought salt tears to her eyes. The excitement was over, the flatness remained; the failure, and the grey skies and leaden water and dying bracken. And she was alone; alone for always. She had defied him, she had defied them all, she had told him that whatever happened she would not go back, she would not be taken back. But she knew now that she had lied. And she crossed the road, her step unsteady, and stumbled blindly up the woodland path above the road, until she came to a place where she knew that she was hidden. There she flung herself down on her face and cried passionately, stifling her sobs in the damp, green moss. She had done wrong. She had done cruel wrong to him But she was only nineteen, and she was being punished! She was being punished!

CHAPTER X

HENRIETTA IN NAXOS

YOUTH feels, let the adult say what he pleases, more deeply than middle age. It suffers and enjoys with a poignancy unknown in later life. But in revenge it is cast down more lightly, and uplifted with less reason. The mature have seen so many sunny mornings grow to tearful noons, so many days of stress close in peace, that their moods are not to the same degree at the mercy of passing accidents. It is with the young, on the other hand, as with the tender shoots; they raise their heads to meet the April sun, as naturally they droop in the harsh east wind. And Henrietta had been more than girl, certainly more than nineteen, if she had not owned the influence of the scene and the morning that lapped her about when she next passed the threshold of the inn.

She had spent in the meantime three days at which memory shuddered. Alone in her room, shrinking from every eye, turning her back on the woman who waited on her, she had found even her pride insufficient to support her. Solitude is a medium which exaggerates all objects, and the longer Henrietta brooded over her past folly and her present disgrace, the more intolerable these grew.

Fortunately, if Modest Ann's heart bled for her, Mrs. Gilson viewed her misfortunes with a saner and less sensitive eye. She saw that if the girl were left longer to herself her health would fail. Already, she remarked, the child looked two years older—looked a woman. So on the fourth morning Mrs. Gilson burst in on her, found her moping at the window with her eyes on the lake, and forthwith, after her fashion, she treated her to a piece of her mind.

"See here, young miss," she said, "I'll have nobody ill in my house! Much more making themselves ill! In three days

Bishop's to be back, and they'll want you, like enough. And a pale, peaking face won't help you, but rather the other way with men, such fools as they be! You get your gear and go out."

Henrietta said meekly that she would do so.

"There's a basket I want to send to Tyson's," the landlady went on. "She's ailing. It's a flea's load, but I suppose," sticking her arms akimbo and looking straight at the girl, "you're too much of a lady to carry it."

"I'll take it very willingly," Henrietta said. And she rose with a spark of something approaching interest in her eyes.

"Well, I've nobody else," said cunning Mrs. Gilson. "And I don't suppose you'll run from me, 'twixt here and there. And she's a poor thing. She's going to have a babby, and couldn't be more lonely if she was in Patterdale." And she described the way, adding that if Henrietta kept the road no one would meddle with her at that hour of the morning.

The girl found her head-covering and submitting with a good grace to the basket, she set forth. As she emerged from the inn—for three days she had not been out—she cast a half-shamed, half-defiant look this way and that. But only Modest Ann was watching her from a window; and if ever St. Martin procured for the faithful a summer day, *intempestive* as the chroniclers have it, this was that day. A warm sun glowed in the brown hollows of the wood, and turned the dying fern to flame, and spread the sheen of velvet over green hill-side and grey crag. A mild west wind enlivened the surface of the lake with the sparkle of innumerable wavelets, and all that had for days been lead seemed turned to silver. The air was brisk and clear; in a heaven of their own, very far off, the great peaks glittered and shone. And the higher Henrietta climbed above the inn-roofs, and the cares that centred there, the lighter, in spite of herself, rose her heart. But how could it be otherwise with that scene of beauty stretched before her?

Half a dozen times as she climbed the hill she paused to view the landscape through the tender mist of her own unhappiness. But every time she stood, the rare fleck of cloud gliding across the blue, or the dancing ripple of the water ap-

pealed to her, and caused her thoughts to wander ; and youth and hope spoke more loudly. She was young. Surely at her age an error was not irreparable. Surely things would take a turn. For even now she was less unhappy, less ashamed.

When she came to the summit of the shoulder, the bare gauntness of Hinkson's farm, which resisted even the beauty of sunshine, caused her a momentary chill. The dog raved at her from the wind-swept litter of the yard. The blind gable-end scowled through the firs ; behind lay the squalid out-buildings, roofless and empty. She hurried by, not without a backward glance. She crossed the ridge, and almost immediately saw another farm in a cup of the hills below her—so directly below her that roofs and yards and pig-styes lay mapped out under her eye. On three sides the smooth hill-turf sloped steeply to the walls. On the fourth, where a stream which had its source beside the farm found vent, a wood choked the descending gorge and hid the vale and lake below.

Deep-seated in its green bowl, the house was as lonely in position as the house on the shoulder ; but after a warmer and more sheltered fashion. Conceivably peace and plenty, comfort and happiness might nestle snugly in it. Yet the nearer Henrietta descended to it, leaving the world of space and view above, the more a sense of stillness and isolation and almost of danger, overcame her. No sound of farm life, no cheery clank of horse-gear, no human voice broke the silence of the hills. Only a few hens scratched in the fold-yard.

She struck on the half-open door, and a pair of pattens clanked across the kitchen flags. A clownish, dull-faced woman with drugget petticoats showed herself.

"I've come to see Mrs. Tyson," Henrietta said. "She's in the house ?"

"Oh, ay."

"Can I see her ?"

"Oh, ay."

"Then——"

"She's on the settle." The woman, as she spoke, stood aside, but continued to stare as if her curiosity grudged the loss of a moment.

The kitchen, or house place—in those days the rough work of a farmhouse was done in the scullery—was spacious and clean, though sparsely and massively furnished. The flag floor was outlined in white squares, and the space about the fire was made more private by a tall settle which flanked the chimney corner and averted the draught. These appearances seemed to tell of a red-armed bustling house-wife. But they were belied by the pale plump face framed in untidy hair, which half in fright and half in bewilderment peered at her over the arm of the settle. It was a face that had been pretty after a feeble fashion no more than twelve months back: now it bore the mark of strain and trouble. And when it was not peevish it was frightened. Certainly it was no longer pretty.

The owner of the face got slowly to her feet. "Is it me you want?" she said, her tone spiritless.

"If you are Mrs. Tyson," Henrietta answered gently.

"Yes, I am."

"I have brought you some things that Mrs. Gilson of the inn wished to send you."

"I am obliged to you," with stiff shyness.

"And if you do not mind," Henrietta continued, "I will rest a little. If I do not trouble you."

"No, I'm mostly alone," the young woman answered, slowly and apathetically. And she bade the servant set a chair for the visitor. That done, she despatched the woman with the basket to the larder.

Then "I'm mostly alone," she repeated. And this time her voice quivered, and her eyes met the other woman's eyes.

"But," Henrietta said, smiling, "you have your husband."

"He's often away," wearily, "by day and night. He's a doctor."

"But your servant? You have her?"

"She goes home, nights. And then——" with a spasm of the querulous face that had been pretty no more than a year before, "the hours are long when you are alone. You don't know," timidly reaching out a hand as if she would touch Henrietta's frock—but withdrawing it, "what it is to be alone, miss, all night in such a house as this."

"No, and no one should be!" Henrietta answered.

Glancing round the great silent kitchen she tried to fancy what the house would be like of nights; when darkness settled down on the hollow in the hills, and the wood cut it off from the world below; and when, whatever threatened, whatever came, whatever face of terror peered through the dark-paned window, whatever sound, weird or startling, rent the silence of the distant rooms, this helpless woman must face it alone!

Henrietta shuddered. "But you are not alone all night?" she said.

"No, but——" in a whisper, "often until after midnight, miss. And once—all night."

Henrietta restrained the words that rose to her lips. "Ah, well," she said, "you'll have your baby by-and-by."

"Ay, if it lives," the other woman answered moodily. "And," she continued in a whisper, with her scared eyes on Henrietta's face, and her hand on her wrist, "if I live, miss."

"Oh, but you must not think of that!" the girl protested cheerfully. "Of course you will live."

"I've mostly nought to do but think," Tyson's wife answered. "And I think queer things. I think queer things. Sometimes"—tightening her hold on Henrietta's arm to stay her shocked remonstrance—"that he does not wish me to live. He's at the house on the shoulder, Hinkson's, the one you passed—most nights. There's a girl there. And yesterday he said if I was lonely she should come and bide here while I laid up, and she'd be company for me. But——" in a quavering tone that was almost a wail, "I'm afraid! I'm afraid."

"Afraid?" Henrietta repeated, trembling a little in sympathy, and drawing nearer the other. "Of what!"

"Of her!" the woman muttered, averting her eyes that she might watch the door. "Of Bess. She's gypsy blood, and that blood sticks at nothing. And she'd be glad I was gone. She'd have him then. I know. She made a sign at me one day when my back was turned, but I saw it. And it was not for good. Besides——"

"Oh, but indeed," Henrietta protested, "indeed, you

must not think of these things. You are not well and you have fancies."

Mrs Tyson shook her head. "You'd have fancies," she answered, in a gloomy tone, "if you lived in this house."

"It is only because you are so much alone in it," the girl protested.

"That's not all," with a shudder. The woman spoke with her eyes glued to the door. "That's not all. You don't know, nobody knows. Nobody knows—that's alive! But once, after I came to live here, when I complained that he was out so much and was not treating me well, he took and showed me——"

"What?" Henrietta spoke as lightly as she could. "What did he show you?" For the other had broken off, and with her eyes closed seemed to be on the point of fainting.

"Nothing, nothing," Mrs. Tyson said, recovering herself with a sudden gasp. "And—and here's the basket, miss. Meg lives down below. Shall she carry the basket to Mrs. Gilson's? It is not fitting a young lady like you should carry it."

"Oh, no, I will take it," Henrietta answered, with as careless an air as she could muster.

And after a moment's awkward hesitation, under the eyes of the dull serving-maid, she rose. She would gladly have stayed and heard more, for her pity and curiosity were alike vividly roused: but it was plain that for the present she could neither act upon the one nor assuage the other. She read a plea for silence in the eyes of the weak, frightened woman; and having said that probably Mrs. Gilson would be sending her that way again before long, she took her leave.

Wondering much. For the low-ceiled kitchen, with its shadowy chimney-corner and its small-paned windows had another look for her now; and the stillness of the house another meaning. All might be the fancy of a nervous, brooding woman. And yet there was something; and something or nothing, there were unhappiness and fear and cruelty in this quiet nook. As she climbed the track that led again to the lip of the basin, and to sunshine and brisk air and freedom, she had less pity for herself, she thought less of herself. She might have been in this poor scared woman's place. She

ight have lain at the mercy of a careless, faithless husband, ho played on her fears and mocked her appeals. She, when . her early unbroken days she complained, might have been iken and scared by—Heaven knew what!

She was still thinking with indignation of the woman's light when she gained the road. A hundred paces brought er to Hinkson's. There, standing on the lower step under ne firs at the corner of the house, and looking over her noulder, as if in the act of entering she had turned to see who assed, was the dark girl; the same whose insolent smile ad annoyed her on the morning of her arrival, before she new what was in store for her.

Their eyes met. Again Henrietta's face, to her intense exation, flamed. Then the dog sprang up and raved at her, nd she passed on down the road. But she was troubled. She was vexed with herself for losing countenance, and still more angry with the girl whose mocking smile had so strange power to wound her.

"That must be the creature we have been discussing," he thought. "Odd that I should meet her, and still more odd that I should have seen her before! I don't wonder that the woman fears her! But why does she look at me, of all people, after that fashion?"

She told herself that it was her fancy, and beginning to forget the matter, tripped on down the road. Presently, before her cheeks or her temper were quite cool, she saw that she was going to meet some one—a man who was slowly mounting the hill on horseback. A moment later she made out that the rider was Mr. Hornyold, and her face grew hot again. The meeting was humiliating. She wished herself anywhere else. But at the worst she could bow coldly and pass by.

She reckoned without Mr. Hornyold, who was wont to say that when he wore a cassock he was a parson, and when he wore his topboots he was a gentleman. He recognised her with a subdued "View, halloa," and pulled up as she drew near. He slid from his saddle—with an agility his bulk did not promise—and barred the way.

With a grin and an over-gallant salute, "Dear, dear, dear,"

he said. "Isn't this out of bounds, young lady?—outside the rules of the bench, eh? What'd Mother Gilson be saying if she saw you here?"

"I have been on an errand for her," Henrietta replied, in her coldest tone.

But she had to stop. The road was narrow, and he had, as by accident, put his horse across it.

"An errand?" he said, smiling more broadly, "as far as this? She is very trusting! More trusting than I should be with a young lady of your appearance, who twists all the men round her finger."

Henrietta's eyes sparkled with anger.

"I am returning to her," she said, "and I am late. Please to let me pass."

"To be sure I will," he said. But instead of moving aside he drew a pace nearer, so that between himself, the horse, and the bank, she was entirely hemmed in. "To be sure, young lady!" he continued. "But that is not quite the tone to take with the powers that be! We are gentle as sucking doves—to pretty young women—while we are pleased; and ready to stretch a point, as we did the other day, for our friend Clyne, who was so deuced mysterious about the matter. But we must have our *quid pro quo*, eh? Come, a kiss! Just one. There are only the birds to see, and I'll warrant"—the leer more plain in his eyes—"you are not always so particular."

Henrietta was not frightened, but she was angry and savage.

"Do you know who I am?" she cried, for the moment forgetting herself in her passion.

"No!" he answered, before she could say more. "That is just what I don't know, my girl. I have taken you on trust and you are pretty enough! But I know Clyne, and he is interested in you. And his taste is good enough for me."

"Let me pass!" she cried.

He tried to seize her, but she evaded his grasp, slipped fearlessly behind the horse's heels and stood free. Hornyold wheeled about, and with an oath:

"You sly baggage!" he cried. "You are not going to escape so easily! You——"

There he stopped. Not twenty yards from him, and not more than that distance beyond her, was a stranger. The sight was so little expected in that solitary place, he had been so sure that they were alone and the girl at the mercy of his rudeness, that he broke off, staring. The stranger came slowly on, and when almost abreast of the girl raised his hat and paused, dividing his regards between the scowling magistrate and the indignant girl.

"Good morning," he said, addressing Henrietta. "If I am not inopportune, I have a letter for you from Captain Clyne."

"Then be good enough," she answered, "first to take me out of the company of this person." And she turned her shoulder on the justice, and taking the stranger with her—almost despite himself—she sailed off—a picture of outraged dignity, down the road.

Mr. Hornyold glared after her, his bridle on his arm, his face red with fury. Seldom had he been so served.

"A parson, by heaven!" he said. "A regular methody, too, by his niminy-piminy get-up! Who is he, I wonder, and what in the name of mischief brought him here just at that moment? Ten to one she was looking to meet him, and that was why she played the prude, the little cat! To be sure. But I'll be even with her—in Appleby gaol or out! As for him, I've never set eyes on him. And I've a good notion to have him taken up and lodged in the lock-up! Any way, I'll set the runners on him. Not much spirit in him by the look of him! But she's a regular spit-fire!"

Mr. Hornyold had been so long accustomed to consider the girls of the village fair sport, that he was considerably put out. True, Henrietta was not a village girl. She was something more, and a mystery; nor least a mystery in her relations with Captain Clyne, a man whom the justice admitted to be a more important person than himself. But she was in trouble, she was under a cloud, she was smirched with suspicion; she was certainly no better than she should be. And not experience only, but all the coarser instincts of the man forbade him to believe in such a woman's "No."

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN CLYNE'S PLAN

FOR a full hundred yards Henrietta walked on with her head in the air, too angry to accost or even to look at her companion; who, on his part, tripped meekly beside her. Then a sense of the absurdity of the position—of his position rather than her own, for she had whirled him off whether he would or no—overcame her. And she laughed.

"Was ever anything so ridiculous?" she cried. And she looked at him askance and something ashamed. She did not know it, but the quick movement which had enabled her to escape had loosened the thick mass of her fair hair; and this, with her rose-flushed cheeks and kindled eyes, showed her so handsome that it was well the impetuous Mr. Hornyold was no longer with her.

The stranger was apparently less impressionable. "I am glad," he said primly, "that my coming was so opportune."

"Oh, I was not afraid of him," Henrietta answered, tossing her head.

"No?" he rejoined. "Indeed. Still, I am glad that I came so opportunely."

He was a neat, trim man in black, of a pale complexion, and with the small features and the sharp nose that indicate at once timidity and obstinacy; the nose that in the case of the late Right Honourable William Pitt, whom he was proud to resemble, meant something more. But for a pair of bright eyes he had been wholly mean, and wholly insignificant, and Henrietta saw nothing in him either formidable or attractive. She had a notion that she had seen him somewhere; but it was a vague notion, and how he came to be here or

ommissioned to her she could no more conjecture than if e had risen from the ground.

"You are a stranger here?" she said at length, after more than one side-long glance.

"Yes, I descended from the coach an hour ago."

"And came in search of me?"

"Precisely," he replied. "Being empowered to do so," e continued, with a slight, but formal bow, "by Captain nthony Clyne, to whom I have the honour—my name is utton—of being related in the capacity of chaplain."

She coloured more violently with shame than before with nger, and all her troubles came back to her. Probably is man knew all; knew what she had done and what had appened to her. It was cruel; oh, it was cruel to send him! or a moment she could not collect her thoughts or master er voice. But at last:

"Oh!" she said confusedly, "I see. A lovely view from ere, is it not?"

"Yes, to be sure," he replied, with the same precision with hich he had spoken before. "I ought to have noticed it."

"And you bring me a letter?"

"It was Captain Clyne's wish that I——" he hesitated, nd was plainly embarrassed—"that I should, in fact, offer ny company for a day or two. While you are under the care of the good woman at the inn."

She turned her face towards him, and regarded him with mixture of surprise and distaste. Then,

"Indeed?" she said coldly. "In what capacity, if you lease?"

But the words said, she felt her cheeks grow hot. They thought so ill of her, she had so misbehaved herself, that a Fluenna was not enough; a clergyman must be sent to lecture her. By-and-by he would talk goody-goody to her, such as they talked to Lucy in the Fairchild family! Save that she was grown up and Lucy was not.

"But it does not matter," she continued hurriedly, and before he could answer: "I am obliged to you, but Mrs. Gilson is quite able to take care of me."

"And yet I came very opportunely—just now," he said. "I am glad I came so opportunely."

Reminded of the insolence to which her loneliness had exposed her, Henrietta felt her cheek turn a deeper hue.

"Oh," she said "I did not need you! But I thought you said that you brought a letter?"

"I have a letter. But I beg leave to postpone its delivery for a day or two."

"How"—in astonishment—"if it is for me?"

"By Captain Clyne's directions," he answered coldly.

She stopped short and faced him, rebellion in her eyes.

"Then why," she said proudly, "seek me out now if this letter is not to be delivered at once?"

"That, too, is by his order," Mr. Sutton explained in the same tone "And pardon me for saying," he continued, with a meaning cough, "that I have seen enough to be assured of Captain Clyne's forethought. Apart from which, in Lancashire, at least, the times are so troubled, the roads so unsafe, the common people so outrageous, that for a young lady to walk out alone is not safe"

"He should have sent a servant, then!" she answered sharply.

A faint colour rose to the chaplain's cheeks.

"He thought me more trustworthy, perhaps," he said meekly. "And it is possible that he was under the impression that my company might be more acceptable."

"If I may be plain," she answered, "I am in no mood for a stranger's company."

"And yet," he said, with a gleam of appeal in his eyes, "I would fain hope to make myself acceptable."

She gave him no direct answer, only, "I cannot understand; I really cannot understand," she said, "of what he was thinking. You had better give me the letter now, sir. I may find something in that which may explain."

But he only cast down his eyes.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I must not disobey the directions which Captain Clyne laid upon me."

"Very good," she retorted; "that is as you please. Only

our paths separate here. The road we are on will take u to the inn. You cannot miss it. My path lies this way." And with a stiff bow she laid her hand on the gate which ve entrance to the field-path; the same that led down rough the coppice to the back of the Low Wood Inn. She ssed through.

He hesitated an instant, then he also turned in at the gate. nd as she halted, eyeing him in displeasure—

"I really cannot let you stray from the high-road alone," said. "You will pardon me, I am sure, if I seem intrusive. ut it is not safe. I have seen enough," with a smirk, "to now that—that beauty unattended goes in danger amid ese lovely"—he waved his hand in kindly patronage of e lake—"these lovely, but wild surroundings."

"You mean," she answered, with a dangerous light in her es, "that you will force your company on me, sir? Whether will or no?"

"Not force, no! No! No! But I must, I can only do ; I am ordered. I should not presume of myself," he con- nued, with more emotion than he had yet betrayed, and ith a touch of real humility, "even to offer my company. should not look so high. I should think such an honour ove me. But I was led to believe——"

"By Captain Clyne?"

"Yes, that—that, in fact, you were willing to make what mends you could for the injury done to him. And that, if nly for that reason, I might expect a favourable reception t your hands."

"But why, sir? Why?" she cried, cut to the quick. To uffer this man, this stranger, to talk to her of making amends as too much! "What good will it do to Captain Clyne if receive you ever so favourably?"

He looked at her with appeal in his eyes. "If you would eign to wait," he said, and he wiped his forehead, "I think could make that more clear to you afterwards."

But very naturally his persistence offended her. That ord amends, too, stuck in her throat. Her pride, made estive by her encounter with Hornyold, was up in arms.

"I shall not wait a moment," she said. "Not a moment! Understand, sir, that if you accompany me against my will, my first act on reaching the inn will be to complain to the landlady, and seek her protection."

"Surely not against Captain Clyne's pleni—plenipotentiary?" he murmured abjectly. "Surely not?"

"I do not know what a plenipotentiary is," she retorted. "But if you follow me, you follow at your peril!"

And she turned her back on him, and plunged downwards through the wood. She did not deign to look behind; but her ears told her that he was not following. For the rest, all the beauty of the wood, shot through with golden lights, all the cool loveliness of the dell with its emerald mosses and flash of jewelled wings were lost upon her now; so sore was she and so profoundly humiliated. Twice in one morning she had been insulted. Two men in one hour had shown her that they held her fair game. Were they right, after all, who preached that outside the sanctum of home no girl was safe? Or was it her story, her conduct, her disgrace known to all for miles round that robbed her of the right to respect?

Either way she was unhappy, frightened, shocked, and longed to be within doors, where she need not restrain herself. Too proud to confide in Mrs. Gilson, save in the last resort, she longed none the less for some one to whom she could unburden herself. Was she to go through the world exposed to such scenes? Must she be daily and hourly on her guard against insult, or more odious gallantries? And if these things befell her in this quiet spot, what must she expect in the world, deserted as she was by all those who would once have protected her?

At least she would gain her room without further unpleasantness, for the path she followed led her to the back door, and she could enter that way. But she was not to be so fortunate. In the yard, awaiting her with his hat in his hand and the flush of haste on his pallid face, was Mr. Sutton.

Poor Henrietta! she ground her small teeth together in her rage. But her mind was quickly made up. If Mr. Sutton counted on her being worse than her word she would show him his mistake.

"I shall send for the landlady," she said; and beckoning a stable-help who was crossing the yard with a bucket, "Fetch Mrs. Gilson," she said. "Tell her——"

"One moment!" Mr. Sutton interposed with firmness "I am going to give you the letter. It will explain all, and I hope justify my conduct, which I cannot believe to have been offensive."

"That is a matter of opinion," Henrietta said. She held out her hand. "The letter, sir, if you please."

"One favour!" he cried, with a gesture that deprecated her impatience. He waved the groom out of hearing. "This is not a fit place for you or"—with a return of dignity—"for the business on which I am here. Do me the favour of seeing me indoors, or of walking a few yards with me. There is a seat by the lake, if you will not admit me to your apartments."

She frowned at him. But she saw the wisdom of concluding the matter, and she led the way into the road and turned to the right. Immediately, however, she remembered that the Ambleside road would lead her to the spot where Captain Clyne had taken leave of her, and instinctively she turned and walked the other way until she came to the place where the Troutbeck lane diverged. There she stood.

"The letter, if you please," she said, with all the contemptuous hardness which youth, seldom considerate of others' feelings, is apt to display.

He held it an instant in his hand as if he could not bear to part with it. But at last, with a dismal look and an abject sentence or two, he gave it up.

"I beg you, I implore you," he muttered as she took it, "to announce no hasty decision. To believe that I am something more and better than you think me now. And that ill as I have set myself before you, I would fain labour to show myself more—more worthy!"

The words were so strange, his manner was so puzzling, that they pierced the armour of her dislike, and she paused, staring at him.

"Worthy!" she exclaimed. "Worthy of what?"

"The letter——"

"Yes, the letter will tell me."

And with a haughty air she broke the seal. As she read she turned herself from him, so that he saw little more of her face than her firmly moulded chin. But when she had carried her eyes some way down the sheet he noticed that her hands began to shake.

"Henrietta," so Captain Clyne began,—"for to add any term of endearment were either too little or too much—I have thought long and painfully, as becomes one who expected to be by this time your husband, on the situation in which you have placed yourself by an escapade the consequences of which, whatever action be taken, must be permanently detrimental. Of these, as they touch myself, I say nothing, the object of these lines being to indicate a way by which I trust your honour and character may be redeemed. The bearer, whom I know for a man of merit and respectability, saw you by chance on the occasion of your visit to my house, and, as I learned by a word indiscreetly dropped, admired you. He has been admitted to the secret of your adventure, and is willing, without more and upon my representation of the facts of the case, to make you his wife and to give you the shelter of his name. After long thought I can devise no better course, whereby, innocent of aught but folly, as I believe you to be, the honour of the family can be preserved. Still, I would not suggest or advise the step did I not know Mr. Sutton, though beneath us by extraction, to be a person of parts and worth in whose hands your future will be safe, while his material prosperity shall be my care. I have advised him to take such opportunities as offer of commending himself to you before delivering this note. Gladly would I counsel you to take the advice of your brother and his wife were I not aware how bitter is their resentment and how complete their estrangement. I, on the other hand, whose right to advise you may question—— But it were idle to say more than that I forgive you, as I hope to be forgiven. Nor will your interests ever be indifferent to

"Your kinsman,

"Anthony Clyne."

Mr. Sutton noted the growing tremor of the hands which held the paper—he could hear it rustle. And his face, usually so pallid, flushed faintly. Into the greyness of a life that had been happier if the chaplain had possessed less of those parts for which Captain Clyne commended him, had burst this vision of a bride, young, beautiful, and brilliant; a daughter

tthat world which thought him honoured by the temporary
ssession of a single finger, or the gift of a careless nod.
ho could blame him if he succumbed? Aladdin, on the
int of marriage with the daughter of the Sultan, bent to
greater temptation; nor any barber or calendar of them
, when on the verge of a like match. He had seen Henrietta
ce only; he had viewed her then as a thing of grace and
inement meet only for his master. At the prospect of
ssessing her, such scruples as rose in his mind faded quickly.
e told himself that he would be foolish indeed if he did not
rry the matter through with a bold face; or if for fear of
few hard words, or a pouting beauty, he yielded up the
portunity of a life.

On the hill he had proved himself equal to the call. Not
now. For he had pictured the girl taking the news in
any ways, in scorn, in anger, with shallow coquetry, or in
ill resignation. But he had never anticipated the way in
hich she did take it. When she had read the letter to the
d she turned her back on him and bent her head.

"Oh!" she cried; and broke into weeping—not passionate
r bitter, he was prepared for that—but the soft and helpless
eeping of a broken thing.

That they, that Anthony Clyne, above all, should do this
her! That he should think of her as a chattel to be handed
om one to another, a girl so light that all men were the
me to her, if they were men! That they, that he should
old her so cheap, deem her so smirched by what had passed,
isread her so vilely as to think that she had fallen to this!
hat with indifference she would give herself to any man, no
atter to whom, if she could that way keep her name and
old up her head!

It hurt her horribly. Nay, for the time it broke her down.
he mid-day coach swept by to the inn door, and the parson,
anding beside her, ashamed of himself and conscious of the
assengers' curious glances, wished himself anywhere else.
ut she was wounded too sorely to care who saw or who heard;
nd she wept openly though quietly until the first sharpness of
ne pain was blunted. Then he thought, as her sobbing grew

less vehement, that his time was come, that he might yet be heard. And he murmured that he was grieved, sorely grieved.

"So am I!" she said, dabbing her eyes with her wet handkerchief. She sobbed out the words so humbly, so weakly that he was encouraged.

"Then may I—may I return presently?" he murmured, with a nervous cough. "Ahem! you must stand in need of advice? And—and of some one near you? When you are more composed perhaps? Yes. Not that there is any hurry," he added, frightened by a movement of her shoulders. "Not at all. I'll not say another word now! By-and-by, by-and-by, dear young lady, you will be more composed. To-morrow, if you prefer it, or even the next day. I shall wait, and I shall be here."

She gave her eyes a last dab and turned.

"I do not blame you," she said, her voice now and again broken by a sob. "You did not know me. But you must go back—you must go back to him at once and tell him that I—that he has punished me as sharply as he could wish." She dabbed her face again. "I do not know what I shall think of him presently, but I—Oh, oh!" with a fresh burst of tears, "that he should do this to me! That he should do this!"

He did not know her, as she said; and small blame to him he misread her. Because she neither stormed nor sneered but only wept in this heart-broken fashion, like a child cowed by a beating, he fancied that the task before him was, if difficult, not above his powers. He thought her plastic, a creature easily moulded; and that already she was bending herself to the fate proposed for her. And in soothing tones, for he was genuinely sorry for her, "There, there, my dear young lady," he said, "I know it is something hard. It is hard. But in a little while, a very little while, I trust it will seem less hard. And there is time before us. Time to become acquainted, time to gain knowledge of one another. There is no hurry."

She lowered her handkerchief from her eyes and looked at him, over it, as if, without understanding, she thanked him for his sympathy. With her tear-washed eyelashes and rumpled hair and neck-ribbon she looked more childish,

ce seemed to him less formidable. He took heart of grace go on.

"Captain Clyne shall be told what you feel about it," he iid, thinking to soothe and humour her. "He shall be told l in good time. And everything I can say and anything can do to lighten the burden and meet your wishes——"

"You?"

"——I shall do, be sure!"

He was beginning to feel his feet, and he spoke earnestly, nd, to do him justice, with feeling.

"Your happiness, believe me," he said, "will be the one, t any rate the first, and main object of my life. As time goes n I hope and believe that you will find a recompense in the ervice and devotion of a life, although a humble life; and lways I will be patient. I will wait, my dear young lady, in ood hope."

"Of what?"

The tone of the two words shook Mr. Sutton unpleasantly. He reddened. But with an effort, "In what hope?" he nswered, embarrassed by the sudden rigidity of her face.

In the hope," with a feeble smile, "that in no long time— am presumptuous, I know—you will see some merit in me, ny dear young lady. And will assent to my wishes, my umble, ardent wishes, and those of my too-generous patron."

There were no tears in her eyes now. And she seemed to ower above him in her indignation.

"Your wishes, you miserable little man?" she cried, with look which pierced his vanity to the quick. "They are othing to me; go back to your master!"

And before he could rally his forces or speak she was gone rom him into the house. He heard a snigger behind the edge, but by the time he had climbed the bank—with a rimson face—there was no one to be seen.

He stood an instant, brooding, with his eyes on the road.

"A common man would give up," he muttered. "But I hall not! I am no common man. I shall not give up!"

CHAPTER XII

THE OLD LOVE

MR. SUTTON was a vain man and sensitive, and, though he clung to hope, Henrietta's words hurt him to the quick. The name of Chaplain was growing obsolete ; it was beginning to import unpleasant things. And with this chaplain in particular his dependence was a sore point ; for with much capacity, he lacked, and knew that he lacked, that strength of mind which enables a man to hold his own, be his position what it may. For an hour, writhing under the reflection that even the yokels about him were aware of his discomfiture, he was cast down to the very ground. He was inclined to withdraw his hand and let the dazzling vision pass.

Then he rallied his forces. He bethought him once more how abnormal was the chance, how celestial the dream, how sweet the rapture of possessing the charms that now flouted him. And he took heart of grace. He raised his head, he enlisted in the cause all the doggedness of his nature. He recalled stories, inaccurately remembered, of Swift and Voltaire and Rousseau, all dependants who had loved, and all men of no greater capacity, it was possible, than himself. What slights had they not encountered, what scornful looks, and biting gibes ! But they had persisted, having less in their favour than he had ; and he would persist. And he would triumph as they had triumphed. What matter a trifling loss of countenance as he passed by the coach-office, or a burning sensation down the spine when those whom he had left tittered behind him ? He laughed best who laughed last.

For such a chance would never, could never fall to him

ain. The Caliph of Bagdad was dead, and princesses dded no longer with calendars. Was he to toss away the e ticket which the lottery of life had dropped in his lap? rely not. And for scruples—he felt them no longer. The l's stinging words, her scornful taunt, had silenced the small ice that on his way hither had pleaded for her, urging him spare her loneliness, to take no advantage of her defence-ss position. Bah! If that were all, she could defend herself ell.

So Henrietta, when she came downstairs, a little paler and little prouder, and with the devil that is in all proud women little nearer to urging her on something, no matter what, at might close a humiliating scene, was not long in dis-vering a humble black presence that by turns followed d evaded her. Mr. Sutton did not venture to address r directly. To put himself forward was not his *rôle*. But sought to commend himself by self-effacement, or at the ost by such meek services as opening the door for her without ting his eyes above the hem of her skirt, or placing a thing ithin reach before she learned her need of it. Nevertheless, henever she left her room she caught sight of him; and the nsciousness that he was watching her, that his eyes were her back, that if her gown caught in a nail of the floor would be at hand to release it, wore on her nerves. She ied to disregard him, she tried to be indifferent to him. ut there he always was, pale, obstinate, cringing, and waiting. nd so great is the power of persistence, that she began to ar him.

Between his insidious court and the dread of Mr. Hornyold's llantries she was uncomfortable as well as wretchedly un-appy. Not uncomfortable through fear; of that she felt t a jot. But the position shamed her. She felt that it as her own conduct which she had to thank for their pursuit; nd for Anthony Clyne's more cruel insult, which she swore e would never forgive. She knew that in the old life, ithin the fence where she had been reared, no one had ever ared to take a liberty with her or dreamed of venturing on freedom. Now it was so different. So different! And she

was so lonely. She stood fair game for all. Presently even the village louts would nudge one another when she passed, or follow her in the hope of they knew not what.

Already, indeed, if she passed the threshold she had a third follower; whose motives were not those of the other two, but were scarcely less offensive. Mr. Bishop had been away for nearly a week scouring the roads between Cockermouth and Whitehaven, and Maryport and Carlisle. He had drawn as he hoped a net round the quarry—if it had not already escaped. In particular, he had made sure that trusty men—and by trusty men Mr. Bishop meant men who would not refuse to share the reward with their superior—watched the most likely places. These arrangements had taken his brown tops and sturdy figure far afield: so that scarce a pot-house in all that country was now ignorant of the face of John Bishop of Bow Street, scarce a saddle-horse was unversed in his weight. Finally he had returned to the centre of his spider's web, and rather than be idle he was giving himself up to stealthy observation of Henrietta.

For he had one point in common with Mr. Sutton. While the Low Wood folk exhausted themselves in surmises and believed in a day a dozen stories of the girl who had dropped so strangely among them, the runner knew who she was. Perforce he had been taken into confidence. But on that his experience of the criminal kind had led him astray. He suspected—remembering how stubbornly she had refused to give her name, to give information, to give anything—that she knew where Walterson lay hid. He thought it more than likely that she was still in relations with him. A girl of her breeding, the runner argued, does not give up all for a romantic stranger unless she loves him: and once in love, such an one sticks at nothing. So he too haunted her footsteps, vanished when she came, and appeared when she retreated; and all with an air of respect which maddened the victim and puzzled the onlookers.

But for this she had been able to spend these days of loneliness and incertitude in wandering among the hills. She was young enough to feel confinement irksome, and she

rned for the open and the unexplored. She fancied that would find relief in plunging into the depths of woods ere, on a still day, the leaves floated singly down to mingle h the dying ferns. She thought that in long roamings, h loosened hair and wind-swept cheeks, over Wansfell ce, or to the upper world of the Kirkstone or the Hog-back ond Troutbeck, she might forget, in the wilds of nature, own small woes and private griefs. At least on the sheep-dden heights there would be no one to reproach her, no one ffling scorn at her.

And two mornings later she felt that she must go; she st escape from the eyes that everywhere beset her. She rked down Mr. Bishop in the road before the house, and e from him she slipped out at the back, and, almost running, mbed the path that led to the hills. She passed through wood and emerged on the shoulder, and drew a deep ath, rejoicing in her freedom. One glance at the lake ead out below her—and something still and sullen under grey sky—and she passed on. She had a crust in her cket, and she would remain abroad all day—for it was d. With the evening she would return footsore and utterly ary—and would sleep.

She was within a few yards of the gate of Hinkson's farm en she saw coming towards her, the last man whom she shed to meet—Mr. Hornyold. He was walking beside his g, with the rein on his arm and his eyes on the road. His nds were plunged far into the fobs of his breeches, and he s studying something so deeply that he did not perceive her. The memory of their last meeting—on that very spot—was pleasantly fresh in Henrietta's mind. and the impulse escape was strong. Hinkson's gate was within reach her arm, the dog was asleep in the kennel; in a twinkling was within and making for the house. Any pretence uld do, she thought. She would ask for a cup of water, nk it, and return to the road. By that time he would ve gone on his way.

She knew that the moment she was round the corner of house she was safe from observation. And seeing the

front so grim, slatternly, and uninviting, she paused. Why go on ? Why knock ? After giving Hornyold time to pass she might slip back to the road without challenging notice.

And she would have done this if her eyes, as she hesitated, had not met those of a grimy old scarecrow who seemed to be playing hide-and-seek with her from the shelter of the few decaying bushes that stood for a garden. Finding herself discovered, and not liking the frowsy creature's looks, she returned to her first plan. She knocked on the half-open door, and receiving no answer, pushed it open and stepped in—as she had stepped into cottages in her own village scores of times.

For an instant the aspect of the interior gave her pause ; so bare, with the northern bareness, so squalid with the wretchedness of poverty was the great dark kitchen. Then, telling herself that it was only the sudden transition from the open air and the wide view that gave a sinister look to the place, she rapped on the table.

Some one moved overhead, crossed the floor slowly, and began to descend the stairs. The door at the foot of the staircase was ajar, and Henrietta waited with her eyes on it. She wondered if the step belonged to the girl whose bold look had so displeased her ; or to a man—the tread seemed too heavy for a woman. Then the door was pushed open a few inches only, a foot at most. And out of the dusky gloom of the stairway a face looked at her, and eyes met her eyes.

The face was Stewart's ! Walterson's !

She did not cry out. She stood petrified, silent, staring. And after a whispered oath wrung from him by astonishment he was mute. He stood, peering at her through the half-open door ; frightened and undecided, the dangerous instinct, which bade him spring upon her, curbed for the moment by his ignorance of the conditions. She might have others with her. There might be men within hearing. How came she there ? And above all what cursed folly had led him to show himself ? What madness had drawn him forth before he knew who it was, before he had made certain that it was Bess's summons ?

It was she who broke the spell. She turned, and with no certainty or backward glance she went out slowly and softly, e a blind person, passed round the house, and gained the ad. Hornyold had gone by and was out of sight; but e did not give a thought to him.

The shock was great. She was white to the lips. By stinct she turned homewards—wandering abroad on open lls was far from her thoughts now. But even so, when she d gone a little way she had to stand and steady herself a gate-post—her knees trembled so violently under her. or by intuition she knew that she had escaped a great nger. The wretched creature cowering in the gloom of e stairway had not moved hand or foot after his eyes met ers; but something in those eyes, a gleam wild and repellant, curred to her memory. And she shuddered.

Presently the first effects of the shock abated and left her ee to think. She knew then that a grievous thing had appened to her, and a thing which must add much to the eight of unhappiness she had thought intolerable an hour efore. To begin, the near presence of the man revolted er. The last shred of the romance in which she had garbed m, the last hue of glamour, were gone, and in the creature hom she had espied cowering on the stairs, with the danger gnal lurking in his eyes, she had seen her lover as others saw im. How she could have been so blind as to invest such a an with virtue, how she could have been so foolish as to ncy she loved *that*, passed her understanding now! Ay, nd filled her with a trembling disgust of herself.

Meantime, that was the beginning only. Beyond that she oresaw trouble and embarrassment without end. If he were aken he would be tried, and she would be called to the itness-box, and the story of her infatuation would be told. ay, she would have to tell it herself in face of a smiling rowd; and her folly would be in all the journals. True, he had had this in prospect from the beginning, and, thinking f it, had suffered in the dark hours. But his capture had hen been vague and doubtful, and the full misery of the xposure had not struck her as it struck her now, with the

picture of that man on the stairs fresh in her mind. To have disgraced herself for that !—for that !

She was thinking of this and was still in great agitation when she came to the spot where the path through the wood diverged from the road. There, most unfortunately, with his hand on the wicket-gate, unseen until she was close upon him, was Mr. Bishop.

He raised his hat and stepped aside, as if the meeting took him by surprise, as if he had not been watching her face through a screen of briars for the last thirty seconds. But that due paid to politeness, the runner's sharp eyes remained glued to her face.

" Dear me, miss," he said, in apparent innocence, " nothing has happened, I hope ! You don't look yourself ! I hope that nobody has been rude to you."

" It is nothing," she made shift to murmur, turning her face aside. And she tried to go by him.

He let her go through the gate, but he kept at her side and scrutinised her face with sidelong glances. He coughed.

" I am afraid you have heard bad news, miss," he said.

" No ! "

" Or, perhaps—seen some one who has startled you ? "

" I have told you it is nothing," she answered curtly. " Be good enough to leave me."

But he merely paused an instant in obedience to the gesture of her hand, then he resumed his place beside her. In the tone of one who had made up his mind to be frank—

" Look here, miss," he said, " it is better to come to an understanding here, where there is nobody to listen. If it is not that somebody has been rude to you, I'm clear that you have heard news, or you have seen somebody. And it is my business to know the one or the other."

She stopped.

" I have nothing to do with your business ! " she cried.

He made a wry face, and spread out his hands in appeal.

" Won't you be frank ? " he replied. " Come, miss ! What is the use of fencing with me ? Be frank ! I want to make things easy for all. Lord, miss, you are not the sort,

nd we two know it, that suffers in these things. You'll me out all right if you'll be frank. It's that I'm working wards; to put an end to it, and the sooner the better. ou can't—a wife and four children, miss, and a radical to oot—you can't think much of him! So why not help instead hindering?"

"You are impudent!" Henrietta said, with a fine colour her cheeks. "Be good enough to let me pass."

"If I knew where he was"—with his eyes on her face—"I ould make all easy. All done, and nothing said, my lady; ust 'from communication received,' no names given, not a ord of what has happened up here! Lord bless you, what o they care in London—and it is in London he'll be tried—hat happens here!"

"Let me pass!" she answered breathlessly.

He was so warm upon the scent he terrified her.

But he did not give way. "Think, miss," he said more ravely. "Think! A wife and six children! Or was it our? Much he cared for any but himself! I'm sure I'm hocked when I think of it!"

"Be silent!" she cried.

"Much he cared what became of you! While Captain lyne, if you were to consult his wishes, miss, I'm sure he'd ay——"

"I do not care what he would say!" she retorted passionately, stung at last beyond reticence or endurance. "I never wish to hear Captain Clyne's name again! I hate him, do you hear? I hate him! Let me pass!"

Then, whether he would or no, she broke from him. She hurried, panting, and with burning cheeks, down the steep path; the briars clutching unheeded at her skirts, and stones rolling under her feet. He followed at her heels, admiring her spirit; he even tried to engage her again, begging her to stop and hear him. But she only pushed on the faster, and presently he thought it better to desist, and he let her go.

He stood and wiped his brow, looking after her.

"Lord, what a spitfire it is!" he muttered. "A fine swelling figure, too, and a way with her head that makes you

feel small! And feet that nimble! But all the same, I'm glad she's not Mrs. Bishop. Take my word for it, she'll be another Mother Gilson—some day."

While Henrietta hurried on at her best pace, resentment quickly giving way to fear and doubt and a hundred perplexities. Betray the man she could not, though he deserved nothing at her hands. She was no informer, nor would become one. The very idea was repulsive to her. Besides, she had woven about this man the fine tissue of a girl's first fancy; she had looked to be his, she had let him kiss her. After that, vile as he was, vilely as he had meant by her, it did not lie with her to betray him—to betray him to death.

But his presence near her was hateful to her, was almost intolerable. Not a day, not an hour, but she must expect to hear of his capture, and know it for the first of a series of ordeals, painful and humiliating. She would be confronted with him, she would be asked if she knew him, she would be asked this and that; and she would have to speak, would have to confess—to those clandestine meetings, to that kiss—while he listened, while all listened. The tale that was known as yet to few would be published abroad. Her folly would be in every mouth, in every journal. The wife and the four children, and she, the silly, silly fool whom this mean thing had captivated, taking her as easily as any doe in her brother's park—the world would ring with them!

CHAPTER XIII

A JEALOUS WOMAN

MEANWHILE the man whom she had left in the gloom of the staircase waited. The sound of the girl's tread died away and silence followed. But she might be taking the news, she might be gone back to those who had sent her. At any moment the party charged with his arrest might appear, and he knew that in a few seconds all would be over. The suspense was intolerable. After enduring it a while he pushed the door open and crept across the floor of the living-room. He brought his haggard face near the casement and peeped cautiously through a lower corner. He saw nothing to the purpose. Nothing moved without, except the old man, whose rags fluttered an instant among the bushes and vanished again. Probably he was dragging up some treasured scrap and hiding it anew with as little sane purpose and as much instinct as the dog that buries a bone.

The man with the price on his head stole back to the foot of the stairs, reassured for the moment; but with his heart still fluttering, his cheeks still bloodless. He had had a great fright. He could not yet tell what would come of it. But he knew that in the form of the girl whom he had tricked and sought to ruin he had seen the gallows very near.

He had not quite regained the staircase when the sound of a light foot treading the walk outside drove him to shelter in a panic. Bess Hinkson had to call him twice before he dared to descend or to run the risk of a second mistake.

The moment she saw his face she knew that something was wrong.

"What is it?" she asked quickly. "What is the matter, lad?"

"I've seen some one," he answered. "Some one who knew me!" He tried to smile, but the smile was a spasm, and suddenly his teeth clicked together. "Knew me, by G—d!" he said.

"Bishop?"

"No, but—some one."

Her face cleared.

"What's took you?" she said. "There is no one else here who knows you."

"The girl."

She stared at him.

"The girl?" she repeated—and the masternote in her voice was no longer fear, but suspicion. "The girl! How came she here? And how," with sudden ferocity, "came she to see you, my lad? You told me there was an end of it!"

"I heard her below and thought it was you."

"But how came she here?"

"I don't know," he answered sullenly, "unless she was sent."

"I don't believe you," Bess answered coarsely. He had been her lover before, going to hide in a new place, he had taken up with this fine madam. And the jealousy of her gypsy blood sparkled in her dark eyes. "She was not sent! But maybe she was sent for! Maybe she was sent for!"

"Who was there I could send for her?" he said.

"I don't know."

"Nor I!" he answered. He shrugged his shoulders in disgust at her folly. To him, in his selfish fear, it seemed incredible folly.

"But you talked with her?"

"Not a word."

"I say," Bess repeated with a furious look, "you did! You talked with her! I know you did!"

"Have your own way, then," he answered despairingly, "though may Heaven strike me dead if there was a word! But she'll be talking soon—and they'll be here. And she"—with a quavering, passionate rise in his voice—"she'll hang me!"

"She'd best not!" the girl replied, with a gleam of sharp teeth. "I hate her as it is. You were on with me before you were on with her! And you left me for her! And I'd like to kill her! But then——"

"Then?" he retorted, his anger rising as hers sank. "What is the use of *then*? It's now is the point! Curse you; while you are talking about hating her, and what you'll do, I'll be taken! They'll be here and I'll hang!"

"Steady, steady, lad," she said. The fear had flown from his face to hers. "Perhaps she'll not tell."

"Why not? Why'll she not tell?"

She did not reply that love might close the girl's mouth. But she knew that it was possible. Instead,

"Maybe she'll not," she repeated. "If she did not come on purpose—and then they'd be here by now—it will take her half an hour to go back to the inn, and she'll have to find Bishop, and he'll have to get a few together. We've an hour good, and if it were night, you might be clear of this and safe at Tyson's in ten minutes."

"But now?" he cried, with a gesture of wrathful impatience. "It is daylight, and maybe the house is watched. What am I to do now?"

"I don't know," she said. And it was noticeable that she was cool, while he was excited to the verge of tears, and was not a mile from hysterics. "It was for this I've been fooling Tyson—to get a safe hiding-place. But if you could get there, I doubt if he is quite ripe. I'd like to commit him a bit more before we trust him."

"Then why play the fool with him?" he answered weakly.

"Because a day or two more and his hiding-hole may be the saving of you," she retorted. "Sho!" shrugging her shoulders in her turn, "the game is not played to an end yet. She'll not tell! She is proud as horses, and if she gives you up she'll have to swear against you. And she'll not stomach that, the little pink and white fool. She'll keep mum, my lad!"

The hand with which he wiped the beads of sweat from his brow shook.

"But if she does tell?" he muttered. "If she does tell?"

She did not answer as she might have answered. She did not remind him of those stories of hair-breadth escapes and of coolness in the shadow of the gallows, which, as much as his plausible enthusiasm, had won her wild heart. She did not hint that his present carriage was hardly at one with them. For when women love, their eyes are slow to open, and this man had revealed to Bess a new world—a world of rarest possibilities, a world in which she and her like were to have justice, if not vengeance—a world in which the mighty were to fall from their seats, and the poor to be no more flouted by squires' wives and parsons' daughters! If she did not still think him all golden, if the feet and even the legs of clay were beginning to be visible, there was glamour about him still. The magnificent plans, the world-embracing schemes with which he had dazzled her, had shrunk indeed into a hole-and-corner effort to save his own skin. But his life was as dear to her as to himself; and doubtless, by-and-by, when this troublesome crisis was past, the vista would widen. So she was content. She was glad to put full knowledge from her, glad of any pretext to divert her own mind and his.

"Lord, I had forgotten!" she cried, after a gloomy pause, "I've a letter! There was one at last!" She searched in her clothes for it.

"A letter?" he cried, and stretched out a shaking hand. "Good lord, girl, why did you not say so before? This may change all. Thistlewood may know a way to get me off. Once in Lancashire, in the crowd, let me have a hiding-place and I am safe! And Thistlewood—he is no cur! He sticks at nothing! He is a good man! I was sure he would do something if I could get a word to him! Lord, I shall cheat them yet!" He was jubilant.

He ripped the letter open. His eyes raced along the lines. The girl, who could scarcely read, watched him with admiration, yet with a sinking heart. The letter might save him, but it would take him from her.

Something between a groan and an oath broke from him. He struck the paper with his hands.

"The fool!" he cried. "The fools! They are coming here!"

"They?" she answered, staring in astonishment. "Who?"

"Thistlewood, Lunt—oh!"—with a violent execration—"God knows who! Instead of getting me off they are bringing the hunt on me! Lancashire is too hot for them, so they are coming here to ruin me! And I'm to send a boat for them to-morrow night to Newby Bridge! But I'll not! I'll not!" passionately. "You shall not go!"

The girl looked at him dubiously.

"After all," she said presently, "if Thistlewood is what you say he is——"

"He's a selfish beast! Thinking only of himself!"

"Still, if he and the rest are men—it'll not be one man, not two, nor five will take you—with them to help you!"

But the thought gave him no comfort. "Much good that will do!" he answered. And passionately flinging down the paper, "I'll not have them! They should fend for themselves."

"Do they say why they are coming?" she asked after a pause.

"Didn't I tell you?" he replied querulously, "because it's too hot for them there! One of the justices, Clyne, if you must know——"

"Clyne!" she ejaculated in astonishment. "Clyne again?"

"Ay!"

"The man—you took the girl from?" she asked in a queer voice.

"The same. He's the deuce down there. He'll get his house burnt over his head one of these nights! He has sworn an information against them and they swear they'll have their revenge. But in the meantime they must needs come here and blow the gaff on me. Fine revenge!" with scorn.

"And they want you to send a boat for them to Newby Bridge?"

"Ay, curse them! I told them I had a boat I could take quietly, and come down the lake in the dark. And they say the boat can equally well fetch them."

"To-morrow night?"

"Ay."

"Well, it can be done," she said coolly, "if the wind across the lake holds. I can steal a boat as I planned for you, and nobody will be the wiser. There's no moon, and the nights are dark; and who's to trace them here from Newby Bridge? After all, it's not from them the danger will come, but from the girl."

He groaned. "I thought you were sure she would not tell," he sneered.

"Well, she has not spoken yet, or they had been here," Bess answered. "But she may speak by-and-by."

"Curse her!"

"And that is why I am not so sorry your folks are coming," she continued thoughtfully. "If they'll help us, we'll stop her mouth. And she'll not speak now, nor by-and-by."

He looked up, startled.

"You don't mean—no!" sharply, "I'll not have it."

"Bless her pretty white fingers!" she murmured viciously.

"I'll not have her hurt!" he repeated, with vehemence. "I've done her harm enough."

"Not so much harm as you would have done her if you'd had your way!" she replied. And her face grew hard. "But now she's to be sacred, is she? Her ladyship's pretty, white fingers are not to be pinched—if you swing for it! Very well! It's your neck will be pulled, not mine."

He fidgeted on his stool but he did not answer. His eye roved round the bare miserable room, with its low ceiling, its deep shadows, and its squalor. At last:

"What do you mean?" he asked querulously. "Why can't you speak plainly?"

"I thought I had spoken plainly enough,' she replied. "But if she's not to be touched, there's an end of it."

"What would you do?"

"What I said, shut her mouth."

He shuddered, and his face, already sallow from long confinement, grew greyer.

"No," he said, "I'll not do it."

She laughed in scorn of him.

"I don't mean what you mean," she said. "I would get her into our hands, hold her fast, stow her somewhere where she'll not speak! Maybe in Tyson's hiding-hole. She'll catch a cold, but what of that? 'Twill be no worse for her than for you, if you've to go there. And the men may be a bit rough with her," Bess continued, with a malicious smile, while her eyes scrutinised his face. "I'll not forbid them, for I don't love her, and I'd like well to see her brought down a bit! But we'll not squeeze her pretty throat, if that is what you had in your mind."

He shivered. "I wouldn't trust you!" he muttered.

She laughed as if he had paid her a compliment.

"Wouldn't you, lad?" she said. "Well, perhaps not. I'd not be sorry to spoil her beauty. But the men—men are such fools—they'll be rather for kissing than killing!"

"All the same, I don't like it," he muttered.

"You'll like hanging less!" she retorted.

The man felt that he played a sorry part. But it was not he who had brought Henrietta to the house, it was fate. It was not his fault that she had seen him; it was his misfortune. Could he be expected to surrender his life to spare her a little fright, a trifling inconvenience, an inconsiderable risk? Why should he? Would she do it for him? On the contrary, he recalled the look of horror which she had bent on him—she who had so lately laid her head on his shoulder, had listened to his blandishments, had thought him perfect. He was vain, and that hardened him.

"I don't see how you will do it," he said slowly.

"Leave that to me," Bess answered. "Or rather, do what I tell you—and the bird will come to the whistle, you'll see!"

"What will you do?"

She told him, and when she had told him she put before him pen and ink and paper; the pen and ink and paper which had been obtained that he might write to Thistlewood. But when it came to details and he knew what he was to write, and what lure to throw out, he flung the pen from him. He told her angrily that he would not do it. After

all, Henrietta had believed in him, had trusted him, had given up all for him.

"I'll not do it," he repeated. "I'll not do it! You want to do the girl a mischief!"

She flared up at that.

"Then you'll hang!" she cried brutally, hurling the word at him. "And, thank God, it will be she will hang you! Why, you fool," she continued vehemently, "you were for doing her a worse turn, just to please yourself! And not a scruple!"

"No matter," he answered, thrusting his hands into his pockets and looking sullenly before him. "I'll not do it!"

Her face was dark with anger, and cruel. What is more cruel than jealousy?

"And that is your last word?" she cried.

He scowled at the table, aware in his heart that he would yield. For he knew—and he resented the knowledge—that he and Bess were changing places; that the upper hand which knowledge and experience and a fluent tongue had given him was passing to her for whom Nature intended it. The weak will was yielding, the strong will was asserting itself. And she knew it also; and in her jealousy she was no longer for humouring him. Brusquely she pushed together the pen and ink and paper.

"Very good," she said. "If that is your last word, be it so. I've done!"

But, "Wait!" he protested feebly. "You are so hasty."

"Wait?" she retorted. "What for? What is the use? Are you going to do it?"

He fidgeted on his stool.

"I suppose so," he muttered at last. "Curse you, you won't listen to what a man says."

"You are going to do it?"

He nodded.

"Then why not say so at once?" she answered. "There, my lad," she continued, thrusting the writing things before him, "short and sweet, as nobody knows better how to do

than yourself! Half a dozen lines will do the trick as well as twenty."

To his credit be it said, he threw down the pen more than once, sickened by the task which she set him. But she chid, she cajoled, she coaxed him, and grimly added the pains he was at to the account of her rival. In the end, after a debate upon time and place, in which he was all for procrastination—feeling as if in some way that salved his conscience—the letter was written and placed in her hands.

Then, "What sort is this Thistlewood?" she asked. "A gentleman?"

"You would not know, one way or the other," he answered, with ill-humour.

"May be not," she replied; "but would you call him one?"

"He's been an officer, and he's been to America, and he's been to France. I don't suppose," looking round him with Turrish scorn, "that he's ever been in such a hole as this!"

"But he's in hiding. Is he married?"

"Yes."

She frowned as if the news were unwelcome.

"Ah!" she muttered. And then, "What of the others?" she continued.

"Giles and Lunt——"

"Ay."

"There's not much they'd stick at," he replied. "They are low brutes; but they are useful. We've to do with all sorts in this business."

"And why not?"

"Why not?"

"Ay! Did you not tell me the other day, there was no one so mean, if we succeed, he may not rise to the top, nor any one so great he may not fall to the bottom?"

"Well?"

"That's what I like about it."

"Well, it is true, anyway. Henriot"—he was on a favourite topic and thought to reinstate himself by long words—"Henriot who was but a poor pike-keeper came

to be general of the National Guard and Master of Paris. Tallien, the son of a footman, ruled a province. Ney—you've heard of Ney ?—who began as a cooper was shot as a Marshal with a score of orders on his breast and as much thought of as a king ! That's what happens if we succeed."

" And some came down ? " she said, smacking her lips.

' Plenty."

" And women too ? "

" Yes."

" Ah," she said slowly, " I wish I had been there."

Not then, but later, when the letter had passed into her hands, he fancied that he saw the drift of her questions. And he had qualms, for he was not wholly bad. He was not cruel ; and the thought of Henrietta's fate if she fell into the snare terrified him. True, Thistlewood, dark and saturnine, a man capable of heroism as well as of crime, was something of a gentleman. And he might decline to go far. He might even elect to take the girl's part. But Giles and Lunt were men of a low type, coarse and brutish, apt for any villainy ; men who, drawn from the slums of Spitalfields, had tried many things before they took up with conspiracy, or dubbed themselves patriots. To such, the life of a spy was no more than the life of a dog : and the girl's sex, in lieu of protecting her, might the more expose her to their ruthlessness. If she fell into their hands, in that lonely place, and Bess, with her infernal jealousy and her furious hatred of the class above her, egged them on, swearing that if Henrietta had not already informed, she might inform—he shuddered to think of the issue. He shuddered to think of what they might not be capable. He remembered the things that had been done by such men in France : things remembered then, forgotten now. And he shuddered anew, knowing himself to be a poor weak thing, of no account against odds.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LETTER

WE left Mr. Bishop standing in the middle of the woodland track and following Henrietta with his eyes. He had suspected the girl before; his suspicions were now grown to certainties. Her agitation, her alarm on meeting him, her refusal to parley, her anxiety to be gone, all—and his keen eyes had missed no item of her disorder—pointed to one thing, to her knowledge of her lover's hiding-place. Doubtless she had been to visit him. Probably she had just left him.

"But she's game, she's very game," the runner muttered sagely. "It's breed does it." And plucking a scrap of green stuff from a briar he chewed it thoughtfully, with his eyes on the spot where he had lost the last wave of her skirt.

Presently he faced about. "Now where is he?" he asked himself. He scanned the path by which they had descended, the briars, the thorns, the undergrowth. "There's hiding there," he thought; "but the nights are cold. It'd kill him in the open. And she'd been on the hill. In a shepherd's hut? Possibly; and it's a pity I was not after her sooner. But we searched the huts. Then there's Troutbeck! And the farms! But how'd he know any one here? Still, I'll walk up and look about me. Strikes me we've been looking wide and he's under our noses—many a hare escapes that way."

He retraced his steps to the road, and strolled up the hill. His air was careless, but his eye took note of everything; and when he came to the gate of Starvecrow Farm he stood and looked over it. The bare and gloomy aspect of the house and the wide view it commanded impressed him. "I

don't wonder they keep a dog," he thought. "A lonely place as ever I saw. Sort of house the pedlar is murdered in! But that black-eyed wench the doctor is gallivanting after comes from here. And if all's true he's in and out night and day. So the other is not like to be here."

Still, when he had walked a few yards farther he halted. He took another look over the fence. He noted the few sombre pines that masked the gable-end, and from them his eye travelled to the ragged garden. A while he gazed placidly, the bit of green stuff in his mouth. Then he stiffened, pointing like a game dog. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, his hand went to the pocket in his skirts, where he carried the "barker" without which he never stirred.

On the other side of the breast-high wall, not six paces from him, a man was crouching low, trying to hide behind a bush.

Mr. Bishop had a stout heart. He had taken many a man in the midst of his cronies in the dark courts about St. Giles's; and with six hundred guineas in view it was not a small danger that would turn him. Yet he was alone. And his heart beat a little quicker as he proceeded, with his eyes still glued to the bush, to climb the wall. The man he was going to take had the rope about his neck—he would reck little of taking another life. And he might have backers. Possibly, too, there was something in this silent hillside—so different from the crowded alleys in which he commonly worked—that a little intimidated the officer.

Yet he did not flinch. He was of the true bull-dog breed. He no more than my Lord Liverpool and my Lord Castlereagh was to be scared by uncertain dangers. He advanced slowly, and was not more than four yards from the bush, he was actually poising himself to leap on his quarry, when the man who was hiding rose to his feet.

Bishop swore, and some one behind him chuckled. He turned as if he had been pricked, his face red.

"Going to take old Hinkson?" laughed Tyson, who had come up unseen, and been watching his movements.

"I wanted a word with him," the runner muttered. He tried to speak as if he were not embarrassed.

"So I see," Tyson answered, and pointing with his finger to the pistol, he laughed.

Mr. Bishop, with his face a fine port-wine colour, lowered the weapon out of sight. Then he laughed, but feebly.

"Has he any sense?" he asked, looking with great disgust at the frowsy old creature, who mopping and mowing at him was holding out a crooked claw.

"Sense enough to beg for a penny," Tyson answered.

"He knows enough for that?"

"He'd sell his life for a shilling."

The runner looked out a halfpenny—a good fat copper coin, to the starveling bronze of these days as Daniel Lambert to a dandy. He put it in the old scarecrow's hand.

"Here's for trespass," he said, and turning his back on him he recrossed the wall.

"That'll stop his mouth," Tyson grinned. "But what are you going to give me to stop mine?"

Bishop laughed on the wrong side of his face.

"A bone and a jorum whenever you'll come and take it," he said.

"Done with you," the doctor replied. "Some day, when that old beldame, mother Gilson, is out, I'll claim it. But if you think," he continued, "that your man is this side you are mistaken, Mr. Bishop. I'm up and down this road day and night, and he'd be very clever if he kept out of my sight."

"Ay?"

"You may take my word for that. I'll lay you a dozen wherever he is, he's not this side."

The runner nodded. He was a little out of conceit with himself, and he thought that the other might be right. Besides, he might spend a week going from farm to farm, and shed to shed, and be no wiser at the end of it. Still, the girl knew, he was convinced; and after all, that was his way to it. She knew, and he'd to her again and have it out of her one way or another. And if she would not speak, he'd shadow her; he'd follow her hour by hour and minute by minute. Sooner or later she'd be sure to try to see her man, and he

would nab them both. There were no two ways about it. There was only one way. An old hand should have known better than to go wasting time in random searchings.

He returned to the inn, more fixed than ever in his notion. With an impassive face he told Mrs. Gilson he must see the young lady.

"She's come in, I suppose?" he added.

"Ay, she's come in."

"Well, you'll please to tell her I must see here."

"I fancy *must* will be your master," Mrs. Gilson replied, with her usual point. "But I'll tell her." And she went upstairs.

Henrietta was seated at the window with her back to the door. She did not turn.

"Here's the Bow-Street man," Mrs. Gilson said, without ceremony. "Wants to know if he can see you. Shall I tell him yes, or no, Miss?"

"No, if you please," Henrietta answered, with a shiver.

Mrs. Gilson went down.

"She says, 'No, on no account,'" she announced, "unless you've got a warrant. Her room's her room, she says, and she'll none of you."

"Hoity-toity!"

"That's what she said," Mrs. Gilson repeated without a blush. "And for my part I don't see why she's to be persecuted. What with you and that sneaking parson, who's for ever at her skirts, and another that shall be nameless——"

"Just so!" said Bishop, nodding.

But whereas he meant Walterson, the good woman meant Mr. Hornyold.

"——her life's not her own," the landlady ended.

"Well, she's to be brought up next Thursday," the runner replied in dudgeon. "And she'll have to see me then." And he took a seat near the foot of the stairs, more firmly determined than before that the girl should not give him the slip again. "He's here," he thought. "He's not a mile from me, I'll stake my soul on it! And before Thursday its odds she'll need to see him, and I'll nab them!" And he

began to think out various ways of giving her something which she would wish to communicate.

Meanwhile Henrietta, seated at her window in the south gable, gazed dolefully out; on the grey expanse of water, which she was beginning to hate, on the lofty serrated ridge, which must ever recall humiliating memories, on the snow-clad peak that symbolised the loneliness of her life. She would not weep, but her lip quivered. And oh, she thought, it was a cruel punishment for that which she had done. In the present she was utterly alone: in the future it would be no better. And yet if that were all, if loneliness were all, she could bear it. She could make up her mind to it. But if not to-day, to-morrow, and if not to-morrow, the day after, the man would be taken. And then she would have to stand forth and tell her shameful tale, and all the world, her world, would learn with derision what a fool she had been; for what a creature she had been ready to give up all, what dross that was which she had taken for gold! And that which had been romantic would be ridiculous.

Beside this aching dread the insult which Captain Clyne had put upon her lost some of its sting. Yet it smarted at times and rankled, driving her into passing rages. She had wronged him, yet, strange to say, she hated to think that she had lost his esteem. And perhaps for this reason, perhaps because he had shown himself less inhuman at the outset than her family, his treatment hurt her to a point she had not anticipated, nor could understand.

The one drop of comfort in her cup sprang from a source as unlikely as the rock which Moses struck. It came from the flinty bosom of Mrs. Gilson. Not that the landlady was outwardly kind; but she was brusquely and gruffly inattentive, trusting the girl and leaving her to herself. And in secret Henrietta appreciated this. She began to feel a dependence on the woman whom she had once dubbed an odious and a hateful thing. She read kindness between the lines of her harsh visage and solicitude in the eye that scorned to notice her. She ceased to tremble when the voice which flung panic through the Low Wood came girding up the

stairs. And though no word of acknowledgment passed her lips, she was conscious that in other and smoother hands she might have fared worse.

The open sympathy of Modest Ann was less welcome. It was even a terrible plague at times. For the waiting-maid never came into the girl's presence without full eyes and a sigh, never looked at her save as the kind-hearted look at lambs that are faring to the butcher, never left her without a gesture that challenged Heaven's pity. Ann, indeed, saw in the young lady the martyr of love. She viewed her as a sharer in her own misfortunes; and though she was forty and the girl nineteen, she found in her echoes of her own heart-throbs. There was humour in this, and, for some, a touch of the pathetic; but not for Henrietta, who had a strong sense of the ridiculous and no liking for pity. In her ordinary spirits she would have either laughed at the woman or rated her. Depressed as she was, she bore with her none too well.

Yet Ann was honestly devoted to her heroine, and dreamed continually of some romantic service—such as the waiting-maid in a chap-book performs for her mistress. Given the occasion, she would have risen to it, and would have cut off her hand before she betrayed the girl's secrets. But her buxom form and square, stolid face did not commend her; they were at odds with romance. And Henrietta did no more than suffer her, until the afternoon of this day, when it seemed to the girl that she could suffer her no longer.

For Ann, coming in with wood for the fire, lingered behind her in a way to try a saint. Her sighs filled the air, until Henrietta turned her head and asked impatiently if she wanted something.

"Nothing, miss, nothing," the woman answered. But she gave the lie to her words by laying her finger on her lip and winking. At the same time she sought for something in an under-pocket.

Henrietta rose to her feet.

"Nothing!" she repeated. "Then what do you——"

"Nothing, miss," Ann rejoined loudly. "I'm to make

up the fire." But she still sought and still made eyes, and at last, with an exaggeration of mystery, found what she wanted. She slipped a letter into Henrietta's hand. "Not a word, miss," she breathed, with a face of rapturous enjoyment. "Take it, miss! Lor!" she continued in the same tone of subdued enthusiasm, "I'd die for you, let alone do this! Even missus should not wring it from me with wild horses!"

Henrietta hesitated.

"Who gave it you?" she whispered. "I don't wish"—she drew back—"I don't wish to receive anything unless I know who sends it."

"You read it," Ann answered in an ecstasy of benevolence. "It's all right, trust me for that! Bless your heart, it comes from the right place. As you will see when you open it!" And with absurd precaution she tiptoed to the fire-place, took up her wood-basket, banged a log on the dogs, and went out.

Henrietta waited with the letter hidden in her hand until the door closed. Then she looked at the paper and grew pale, and was on the verge of tears. Alas! she knew the handwriting. She knew, whether there was a right place or not, that this came from the wrong.

"Shall I open it?" she asked herself. "Shall I open it?'

A fortnight before she had opened it without a thought of prudence, without a glance at the consequences. But a fortnight, and such a fortnight, had taught her much. And to-day she paused. She eyed the coarse paper askance—with repugnance, with loathing. True, it could no longer harm her. She had seen the man as he was, stripped of his disguises. She had read in his face his meanness, his falseness, his cowardice. And henceforth his charms and cajoleries, his sweet words and lying looks were not for her. But she had to think what might be in this letter, and what might come of it, and what she should do. She might burn it unread—and perhaps that were the safer course. Or she might hand it to the Bow Street runner, or she might open it and read it.

Which should she do?

One course she rejected without much thought. To hand the letter to Bishop might be to betray the man to Bishop. And she had made up her mind not to betray the man.

Should she burn it ?

Her reason whispered that that was the right, that that was the wise course. But then she would never know what was in the letter ; and she was a woman and curious. And reason, quickly veering, suggested that to burn it was to incur unknown risks and eventualities. It might be equivalent to giving the man up. It might—in a word, it opened a world of possibilities.

And after all she could still burn the letter when she had read it. She would know then what she was doing. And what danger could she incur, seeing that she was proof against the man's lying tongue, and shuddered at the thought of contact with him ?

She made up her mind. And roughly, hating the task after a fashion, she tore the letter open. With hot cheeks—it could not be otherwise, since the writing was his, and brought back such memories—she read the contents. There was no opening—she was glad of that—and no signature. Thus it ran :—

" I have treated you ill, but men are not as women, and I was tempted, God knows. I do not ask you to forgive me, but I ask you to save me. I am in your hands. If you have the heart to leave me to a violent death, all is said. If you have mercy, meet my messenger at ten to-morrow evening, where the Troutbeck lane comes down to the lake. As I hope to live you run no risk and can suffer no harm. If you are merciful—and oh, for God's sake spare me—put a stone before noon to-morrow on the post of the second gate towards Ambleside."

CHAPTER XV

THE ANSWER

WHEN Henrietta had read the letter twice, shivering and drawing in her breath as often as she came to the passionate cry for mercy that broke its current, she sat gazing at the paper, and her face was rigid. Had he made appeal to her affection, to the past, to that which had been between them, still more had he assumed that the spell was unbroken and her heart was his, her pride had revolted, and revolted passionately. She had spurned the letter and the writer. And perhaps, when it was too late, she had repented.

But that cry, wrung, it seemed, from the man's heart in his own despite, pierced her heart. How could she refuse, if his life hung on her act, if by lifting her finger, she could save him, without risk to herself? The thought of him was repugnant to her, shamed her, filled her with contempt of herself. But she had loved him once, or fancied in her folly that she loved him; and he asked for his life. He, a man, lay at the mercy of a woman, a girl; how could she refuse? If her heart were obdurate, her sex spoke for him.

"And oh! for God's sake spare me!"

She read the words again and again, and shuddered. If she refused, and afterwards when it was too late, when nothing could be done, she repented? If when judgment had passed upon him, and the day was come and the hour and the minute—and in her brain, though she were one hundred miles away, St. Sepulchre's bell tolled—if she repented then how would she bear it?

She would not be able to bear it.

And then other considerations not less powerful, and all

pointing in the same direction, arose in her mind. If she did this thing, whatever it was, the man would escape. He would vanish from the country and from her knowledge and ken. There would be an end of him, and the relief would be great. Freed from the shameful incubus of his presence she would breathe again. She might make a new start then, she might frame some plan for her life. She was too young to suppose that she could ever be happy after this, or that she would live to smile at these troubles. But at least she would not be harassed by continual fears, she would not be kept in a panic by the thought of that which every hour might bring forth. She would be spared the public trial, the ordeal of the witness-box, the shame of open confession. Should she do, then, that which he wished? Ay, a thousand times, ay. Her heart cried ay, her mind was made up. And rising, she walked the room in excitement. Her pulse beat high, her head was hot, she was in a fever to begin, to be doing, to come to an end of the thing and be safe.

But the thing? Her heart sank a little when she turned to that, and conned the note again and marked the hour. Ten? The evenings were long and dark, and the house was abed by ten. How was she to pass out? Nor was that all. What of her position when she had passed out? She shrank from the thought of going alone to meet she knew not who in the darkness by the lonely edge of the water. There would be no help within call at that hour; nor any, if she disappeared, to say which way she had gone. If aught happened to her she would vanish and leave no trace. And they would think perhaps that she had fled to him!

The prospect was terrifying, and nine girls out of ten, though of ordinary courage, would have shrunk back. But Henrietta had a spirit—too high a spirit or she had not been here!—and she fancied that if ever it behoved her to run a risk, it behove her to run one now. And that not for the man's sake only, but for her own. She rose above her momentary alarm, she asked herself what she had to fear. True, when she had met him that morning she had imagined in the gloom of the kitchen that she read murder in his eyes.

But for an instant only; now she laughed at the notion. Safe in her chamber she found it absurd: the bizarre creation of her fancy or her timidity, aided by some shadow cast athwart his face. And for the matter of that, why should he harm her? Her presence at the trysting-place would be his surety that she had no mind to betray him; but that on the contrary she was willing to help him.

"I will go, I must go," she thought. "I must go."

Yet vague alarms troubled her; and she hesitated. If there had been no menace in his eyes that morning—the eyes that had so often looked into hers and languished on her with a lover's fondness—why had she fled so precipitately? And why had her knees shaken under her? Pshaw, she had been taken by surprise. It was repugnance rather than fear which she had felt. And because she had been foolish once, and imagined things, because she was afraid, like a child, of the dark, because she shrank from meeting a stranger after nightfall, surely, surely she was not going to let a man perish whom she could save with one of her fingers!

And still, prudence whispered her, asking why he fixed so late an hour? Why had he not fixed five or six, if it were only out of respect for her? At five it was already dark, yet the world was awake and astir, respectable folk were abroad, and help was within call. She would have met him without hesitation at five or at six. But there, how stupid she was! It was the very fact that the world was astir and awake that made an early hour impossible. If she went at five or at six she would be followed, her movements would be watched, her companion would be noted. The very air would be full of eavesdroppers. She knew that, for the fact irritated her hourly and daily. And doubtless he too, hedged about by fears and suspicions, knew it.

The lateness of the hour was natural, therefore. Still, it rendered her task more difficult. She dared not interfere with the heavy bars that secured the two doors which looked on the lake. She would be heard, even if the task were not beyond her strength. And to gain the back entrance she must thread a labyrinth of passages guarded by wakeful dogs

and sleeping servants; for servants in those days slept on the stairs or in any odd place. She would be detected before she had undone a single bolt.

Then what was she to do? Her bedroom was on the second floor, and exit by the window was not possible. On which, some, surveying the situation, would have sat still, and thought themselves justified. But Henrietta was of firmer stuff; and for such where there is a will there is a way. Mr. Rogers's room, of which she had still the use, was on the first floor of the south wing and somewhat remote from the main part of the house. Outside the door was a sash window which gave light to the passage; and owing to the rise of the hill on every side of the house save the front, the sill of this window was not more than six feet above the garden. She could drop from it with safety. Return was less easy, but with the help of a chair, which she could lower before she descended, she might manage to climb in again. The feat seemed easy and she did not feel afraid. Whether she would feel afraid when the time came was another matter.

In the meantime she had to wait, and sleeping ill that night, she had many uneasy dreams, and waking before daybreak thought herself into a fever. All the dreadful things that might befall her rose before her in the liveliest shapes; and long before the house awoke—there is no fear like five-o'clock-in-the-morning fear—she had given up the notion. But when the dull November day peered in at the bedroom window, and she had risen, she was herself again. She chid herself for the childish terrors in which she had indulged, and lest she should give way to them again she determined to take a decisive step. Some time before noon she slipped out of the house and turned towards Ambleside.

Unfortunately it was a wet morning, and she feared that her promenade in such weather must excite suspicion. Eyes, she was sure, were on her before she had gone a dozen paces. To throw watchers off the scent and to prove herself careless of espial she would not look back; but when she reached the first corner she picked up a stone, and threw it at an

imaginary object on the edge of the lake. She stood an instant with her wet-weather hood drawn about her face as if to mark the effect of her shot. Then she picked up another stone and poised it, but did not throw it. Instead, she walked on with the stone in her hand. All without looking back.

She came to the second gate on the Ambleside road. It was out of sight of the inn, and it seemed an easy and an innocent thing to lay the stone on the head of the pillar—gate-posts in that country are of stone—and to go on her way. But she heard a footstep behind her and panic seized her. She felt that nothing in the world would be so suspicious, so damning as such an act. She hesitated, and was lost. She walked on slowly with the stone in her hand, and the fine rain beating in her face.

Her follower, a country clown, passed her. She loitered until he was out of sight; then she turned and retraced her steps. A half-minute's walking brought her again to the gate. There was no one in sight and in a fever lest at the last some one should take her in the act she set the stone on the top of the post, and passed on.

Half-way back to the inn she stopped. What if the stone had not kept its place? She had merely thrust out her hand as she passed, and deposited the stone without looking. Now she was sure that her ear had caught the faint sound which the stone made in striking the sodden turf. She turned and walked back.

When she reached the gate she was thankful that she had had that thought. The stone had fallen. Fortunately there was no one in sight, and it was easy to pick up the first stone that came to hand and replace the signal. Then she walked back to the inn, inclined to laugh at the proportions to which her simple task had attained in her mind.

She would have laughed after another fashion had she known that her movements from beginning to end had been watched by Mr. Sutton. The chaplain, ashamed yet pursuing, had sneaked after her when she left the inn, hoping that if she went far he might find in some lonely place, where

she could not escape, an opportunity of pleading his cause. He fancied that the lapse of three days, and his patient, mournful conduct, might have softened her ; to say nothing of the probable effect on a young girl of such a life as she was leading—of its solitude, its dullness, its weariness.

On seeing her turn, however, he had had no mind to be detected, and he had slipped into the wood. From his retreat he had seen her deposit the stone : he had seen also her guilty face—it was he who had removed the stone. He had done so, expecting to find a note under it, and she had all but surprised him in the act. When she placed the second, he was within three paces of her, crouching with a burning face behind the wall. The thought of her contempt if she discovered him so appalled him that, cold as it was, he sweated with shame ; nor was it until she had gone some distance that he dared to lift his eyes above the wall. Then he saw that she had put another stone on the gate-post.

He took it in his hand and compared it with the one which he still held. They were as common stones as any that lay in the road. And there was no letter. The conclusion was clear. The stone was a signal. Nor could he doubt for whom it was intended. The London officer was right. Walterson was in the neighbourhood and she was in communication with him. The girl's infatuation still ruled her.

That hardened him a little in his course of action. But he was not at ease, and when some one coughed—slightly but with meaning—while he gazed at the stone, he jumped a yard. He stood, with all the blood in his body flown to his face. The cough had come from the wood behind him, and ten paces from him, peeping over a bush, was Mr. Bishop.

The runner chuckled. " Very well done, reverend sir," he said. " Very well done. You've the makings of a very tidy officer about you. I could not have done it much neater myself. But now, suppose you leave the coast clear, or maybe you'll be scaring the other party."

Mr. Sutton, with his face the colour of beetroot—for he was heartily ashamed of the part he had been playing—began to stammer an explanation.

"I saw the young lady, and didn't—I couldn't understand——"

"What the lay was," Mr. Bishop answered, grinning at the other's discomfiture. "Just so. Same with me. But suppose in the meantime, reverend sir," with unction, "you leave the ground clear for the other party? We can talk as well elsewhere as here, and without queering the pitch."

The chaplain swallowed his vexation as well as he could and complied—but stiffly. The two made their way back in silence to the gap in the wall by which the chaplain had entered. There, having first ascertained that the road was clear, they stepped out. By that time Mr. Sutton was feeling better. After all, he had been right to follow the girl. Left to herself, and a slave to the villain who had fascinated her, she might suffer worse things than a friendly espionage. He determined to take the bull by the horns. "What do you make of it?" he asked, still blushing.

"Queer lay," Bishop answered drily.

"You understand it, then?"

"Middling well. Gypsy patter that." He pointed to the stone.

"You think the young lady is communicating——"

"With another party? I do. Leastways I know it. And the party——"

"Is Walterson?"

"Just so," the runner answered. "Why not? Young ladies are but women, after all, reverend sir, and much like other women, only sometimes more so. I began, I confess, by being of your way of thinking. The lady is so precious snowy and so precious stiff you would not believe ice would melt in her mouth. But when I came to think it all over, and remembered how she stood to it at first and would not give her name, nor any clue by which we could trace where she came from—so that till Captain Clyne turned up I was altogether at a loss—and how she made light of what Walterson had done, when it was first told her, and a lot of little things like that, I began to see how the land lay, innocent as she looks. And after all, come to think of it, if she liked the

man well enough to go off with him,—why should she cut him adrift? When she had, so to speak, paid the price for him, your reverence? How does that strike you?"

"But Captain Clyne," Sutton answered slowly, "who knew her well, and knows her well——"

"I know."

"He does not share your opinion. He is under the belief," the chaplain continued, "that her eyes are open. And that she hates the very thought of the man, and of the mistake she made. His view is that she is only anxious to behave herself."

Bishop winked. "Ay, but Captain Clyne," he said, "is in love with her, you see."

Mr. Sutton stared. The colour rose slowly to his cheeks.

"I don't think so," he said. "In fact, I may say I know that it is not so. He has long given up the remotest idea of the—of the match that was projected."

"May be, may be," the runner answered lightly. "I don't say that that is not so. But it is just when a man has given up all thought of a thing that he thinks of it the most, Mr. Sutton. Anyway, there is the stone, and there is the post, and I'll ask you plain for whom it is meant, if it is not meant for Walterson?"

Mr. Sutton nodded. But his thoughts were still engaged with Captain Clyne's feelings. And the more he considered the point the more inclined he was to think that the runner was right. Clyne's insistence on the girl's innocence, the extreme bitterness that had once or twice broken through his reticence, and an unusual restlessness of manner when he had made the remarkable proposal that Mr. Sutton should take his place, all pointed that way. And this being so, it was strange how the suspicion sharpened the chaplain's keenness to win the prize. If she had still so great a value in the eyes of his patron, how enviable would he be if by hook or crook he could gain her! How very enviable! And was it not for her own good that he should gain her; even if he compassed his end by a little manœuvring, by stooping a little, by spying a little? Ay, even, it might be, by frightening

her a little. In love, as in war, all was fair, and if he did not love her he desired her. She was so desirable, so very desirable, he might be forgiven somewhat if he stooped to conquer: seeing that if he failed this dangerous man held her in his power.

So when Bishop asked for the second time "Will you help me to keep an eye on her? You can do it more easily than I can," he was ready with his answer, though he blushed a little.

"I will stay here and note who passes," he replied. "Yes, I will do that."

"You can do it with less risk of notice than I can," the officer answered. "And I must hark back and keep her in view. It is just possible that this is a ruse, and that the man we want is the other way."

"I will remain," Mr. Sutton said curtly. And he stayed. But he was so taken up with this new view of his patron's feelings that though Bess Hinkson rowed along the shore before his eyes, and looked hard at him, he never saw her.

CHAPTER XVI

A NIGHT ADVENTURE

HENRIETTA sat and listened to the various sounds which told of a household on its way to bed; and she held her courage with both hands. Slip-shod feet moved along the passages, sleepy voices bade good-night, distant doors closed sharply. And still, when she thought all had retired, the clatter of pot or pan in the far-off offices proclaimed a belated worker. And she had to wait and listen and count the pulsations of her heart.

The two wax candles, snuff them as she might, cast but a dull and melancholy light. The clock ticked in the silence of the room with appalling clearness. Her own movements, when she crept to the door to listen, scared her by their stealthiness. It seemed to her that the least of the sounds she made must proclaim her vigil. One moment she trembled lest the late burning of her light arouse suspicion; the next lest the cloak which she had brought in and cast across a chair should have put some one on the alert. Or she tormented herself with the fancy that the snow with which the evening sky had been heavy would fall before she started and betray her footsteps.

Of one thing she tried not to think. She would not dwell on what might happen at the meeting-place. She felt that if she let her thoughts run on that, she would turn coward, she would not go. And one thing at a time, she told herself. There lay her cloak, the window was not three paces from her, the chair which she meant to use stood by the door. In three minutes she could be outside, in half an hour she

light be back. But in the meantime, the room was lonesome nd creepy, the creak of a board made her start, the fall of he wood-ash stopped her breath. Like many engaged in ecret deeds she made her own mystery, and trembled at it. At length all seemed abed.

She extinguished one of the candles and took up her cloak. s she put it on before the pale mirror she saw that her white ace and high-piled hair showed by the light of the remaining andle like the face of a ghost; and she shivered. But that as the last tribute to weakness. Her nature, bold to excess, sserted itself now the moment for action was come. She et the candle on the floor and shaded it so that its light might ot be seen. Then, taking the chair in her hands she stepped nto the dark passage, and closed the door behind her. The lose, heavy smell of the house assailed her as she listened; ut all was still, and she raised the sash of the window. She assed the chair through the aperture and leaning far out hat it might not strike the wall lowered it gently. She felt touch the ground and settle on its legs. Then she climbed ver the sill and let herself down until her feet rested on the hair. She made certain that she could draw herself in again, hen she sprang lightly to the ground.

The chair cracked as her weight left it, and for a moment he crouched motionless against the wall. But she had ittle to fear. Snow had not yet fallen, but it was in the air nd the night was as dark as pitch. She could not see a ard and when she moved, she had not gone two steps from he wall before it vanished, and all that remained to her as some notion of its position. Above, below, around was darkness that could be felt. Still, she found the garden-gate with a little difficulty, and she passed into the road, and urned to the left. She knew that if she walked in that irection she must come to the place—a furlong away—where he Troutbeck lane ran up from the lake-side.

But the blackness was such that lake and hill were all one, nd she had to go warily, now feeling for the bank on her eft, now for the ditch on her right. Not a star showed, and nly in one place a patch of lighter sky broke the darkness

and enabled her to discern the shapes of the trees as she passed under them. It was a night when any deed might be done, any mischief executed beside that lonely water; and no eye see it. But she tried not to think of this. She tried not to think of the tracts of lonely hill that stretched their long arms on her left, or of the deep, black water that lurked on her right. And she had compassed no more than a hundred yards when a faint sound, as of following feet, caught her ears.

She halted, and shook the hood back from her ears. She listened. She fancied that she heard the pattering cease, and she peered into the darkness, striving to embody the thing that followed. But she could see nothing, she could now hear nothing. She had her handkerchief in her hand, and as she stood, peering and listening, she wiped the wind-borne moisture from her face.

Still she heard nothing, and she turned and set off again. But her thoughts were with her follower, and she had not taken three steps before she ran against the bank, and hardly saved herself from a fall.

She felt that with a little more she would lose her head, and, astray in the boundless night, would not know which direction to take. She must pull herself together. She must go on. And she went on. But twice she had the sickening assurance that something was moving at her heels. Nor, but for the thought which by-and-by occurred to her, that her follower might be the person she came to meet, could she have kept to her purpose.

She came at length, trembling and clutching her hood about her, to the foot of the lane. She knew the place by the colder, moister air that swept her face, as well as by the lapping of the water on the strand; the road ran very near the lake at this point. It was a mooring-place for two or three boats, belonging for the most part to Troutbeck; and she could hear a loose oar in one of the unseen craft roll over with a hollow sound. But no one moved in the darkness, or spoke, or came to her; and with parted lips, striving to control herself, she halted, leaning with one hand against

ue angle of the bank. Then—she could not be mistaken—
ue heard her follower halt.

Thirty seconds—it seemed an age—she was silent, and
rced herself to listen, straining her ears. Then she could
ontrol herself no longer.

"Is it you?" she whispered, her voice strained and
ncertain, "I am here."

No one answered. And when she had waited awhile glaring
nto the night where she had last heard the footsteps she
nuddered violently. For a space she could not speak, she
eant against the bank.

Then, "Is it you?" she whispered, turning her face this
way and that. "Speak if it is! Speak! For God's sake,
peak to me!"

No one answered, but out of the gloom came the low creep
ff the wind among the reeds, and the melancholy lapping of
he water on the stones. Once more the oar in the boat
olled over with a hollow coffin-like echo. And from a dis-
ance another sound, the flap and beat of a sail as the rudder
was put over, came off the surface of the lake. But she
did not heed this. It was with the darkness about her, it
was with the skulking thing a pace or two from her, it was
with the arms stretched out to clutch her, it was with the
ear that was beginning to stifle her as the thick night stifled
her, that she was concerned.

Once more, striving fiercely to combat her fear, to steady
her voice, she spoke.

"If you do not answer," she cried, "I shall go back!
You hear? I shall go back!"

Still no answer. And on that, because a frightened woman
s capable of anything, and especially of the thing which is
the least to be expected, she flung herself forward with her
hands outstretched and tried to grapple with the thing that
terrified her. She caught nothing: all that she felt was a
warm breath on her cheek. She recoiled as quickly as she
had advanced, but unfortunately her skirt brushed something
as she fell back, and the contact, slight as it was, drew a low
shriek from her. She leant panting against the bank, like

a thing at bay. The beating of her heart seemed to choke her, the gloom to stretch out arms about her. The touch of a moth on her cheek would have drawn a shriek. And on the lake—but near the shore now, a bowshot from where she crouched, the sail of the unseen boat flapped against the mast and began to descend. The light of a shaded lanthorn beamed for an instant on the dark surface of the water, then vanished.

She did not see the lanthorn, she did not see the boat, for she was glaring in the other direction, the direction in which she had heard the footsteps. All her senses were concentrated on the thing close to her. But some reflection of the light, glancing off the water, did reveal a thing—a dim, uncertain something—man or woman, dead or alive, standing close to her, beside her: and with a shriek she sprang from the thing, whatever it was, gave way to blind panic, and fled. For some thirty yards she kept the road. Then she struck the bank and fell, violently bruising herself. But she felt nothing. In a moment she was on her feet again and running on, running on blindly, madly. She fancied feet behind her, and a hand stretched out to seize her hair; and in terror, that terror which she had kept at bay so long and so bravely, she ran on at random, until she found herself, she knew not how, clinging with both hands to the wicket-gate of the garden. A faint light in one of the windows of the inn had directed her to it.

She stood then, still trembling in every limb, but drawing courage from the neighbourhood of living things. And as well as her laboured breathing would let her, she listened. But presently she caught the stealthy trip-trip of feet along the road, and in a return of terror she opened the gate and slipped into the garden. She had the presence of mind to close the gate after and without noise. But that done, woman's nerves could bear no more. Her knees were shaking under her, as she groped her way to her window, and felt for the chair which she had left beneath it.

The chair was gone. Gone? But there, she could not have found the right window; that was it. She felt with

her hands along the wall, felt farther. But there was no chair—anywhere. She had made no mistake. Some one had removed the chair.

Strange to say, the moment she was sure of that, the fear which had driven her in headlong panic from the water-side left her. She thought no more of her stealthy attendant. Her one care now was to get in—to get in and still to keep secret the fact that she had been out! She had trembled like a leaf a few moments before, in fear of the shapeless thing that crouched beside her in the night. Now, with no more than the garden-fence between her and it, she feared it no more than a feather. She regained her ordinary plane, and foresaw all the suspicion, all the inconvenience, to which her position, if she could not re-enter, must subject her. And the smaller, the immediate fear expelled the greater and more remote.

She leant against the wall and tried to think. Who had, who could have removed the chair? She could not guess. And thinking only increased her eagerness, her anxiety to enter and be safe. She must get in, even at a little risk.

She tried to take hold of the sill above her, and so to raise herself to the window by sheer strength. But she could not grasp the sill, though she could touch it. Still, if she had something in place of the chair, if she had something a foot high on which to raise herself she might succeed. But what? And how was she to find anything in the dark? She peered round, compelling herself to think. With a single foot of height she was saved. Without that foot of height she must rouse the house; and that meant disgrace and contumely, and degrading suspicion. Her cheeks burned at the prospect. For no story, no explanation would account satisfactorily for her absence from the house at such an hour.

She was about to grope her way round the house to the yard at the back—where with luck she might find a chicken coop or a stable bucket—when five paces from her the latch of the wicket clicked sharply. By instinct she flattened herself against the wall; but she had scarcely time to feel

the sudden leap of her heart before a mild voice spoke out of the gloom.

"I'm afraid I have taken your chair," it murmured, "pray forgive me. I am Mr. Sutton, and I—I am very sorry!"

"You followed me!"

"I——"

"You followed me!" Her voice rang imperative with anger. "You followed me! You have been spying on me! You!"

"No! no!" he muttered. "I meant only——"

"How dare you! How dare you!" she cried in low fierce tones. "You have been spying on me, sir! And you removed the chair that—that I might not enter without your help."

He was silent a moment, standing, though she could not see him, with his chin on his breast. Then:

"I confess," he said in a low tone. "I confess it was so. I spied on you."

"And followed me!"

"Yes." He admitted it, his hands extended in unseen deprecation, "I did."

"Why?" she cried. "Why, sir?"

"Because——"

"But I do not want to know," she retorted, cutting him short as she remembered the time, and place, "I want to know nothing, to hear nothing from you! The chair, sir! The chair, if you do not wish to add further outrage to your unmanly conduct. Set me the chair and go!"

"But hear at least," he pleaded, "why I followed you, Miss Damer. Why——"

She stamped her foot on the ground.

"The chair!" she repeated.

He was most anxious to tell her that though other motives had led him to spy on her and watch her window, he had followed her out of a pure desire to protect her. But her insistence overrode him, silenced him. He set the chair under the passage window and murmured submissively that it was there.

That was enough for her. She felt for it, found it, and without thought of him or word to him, she climbed in. That done she stooped and drew the chair up, and closed the window down upon him and secured it. Next, feeling for the door of Mr. Rogers's room she got rid of the chair, and seized her hidden candle and crept out and up the stairs. Apparently all the house, save the man who had detected her, slept. But she did not dare to pause or prove the fact. She had had her lesson, a severe one; and she did not breathe freely until the door of her chamber was locked behind her, and she knew herself once more within the bounds of the usual and the proper.

Then for a brief while, as she tore off her damp clothes, her thoughts ran stormily on Mr. Sutton: nor did she dream, or he, from what things he had saved her. The man was a wretch, a spy, a sneak trying to worm himself into her confidence. She would box his ears if he threatened her or referred to the matter again. And if he told others—she did not know what she would not do! For the rest, she had let herself be scared by a nothing, by a step, by a sound; and she despised herself for her cowardice. But—she had that consolation—she had played her part, she had gone to the rendezvous, she had not failed. The fault lay with him who should have met her there, and who had not met her.

And so, shivering and chilled—for bedroom fires were not yet, and she was worn out with fright and exposure—she hid herself under the heavy patchwork quilt and sought comfort in the sleep of exhaustion. It was not long in coming, for she suspected no more than she knew. Like the purblind insect that creeps upon the crowded pavement and is missed by a hundred feet, she discerned neither the dangers which she had so narrowly escaped, nor those into which her movements were fated to hurry her.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EDGE OF THE STORM

IT was daylight when she awoke; but it had not been daylight long. Yet some one was knocking, and knocking loudly at the door of her bedroom. She rose on her elbow, and looking at the half-curtained window decided that it was eight o'clock, perhaps a little later. But not so much later that they need raise the house in waking her.

"Thank you," she cried petulantly. "That will do! That will do! I am awake." And she laid her head on the pillow again, and closing her eyes, sighed deeply. The events of the night were coming back to her—and with them her troubles.

But, "Please to open the door, miss!" came the answer in gruff accents. "I want to speak to you, by your leave."

Henrietta sat up, her hair straggling from under the night-cap that framed her pretty features. The voice that demanded entrance was Mrs. Gilson's: and even over Henrietta that voice had power. She parleyed no longer. She threw a wrap about her, and hastily opened the door.

"What is it?" she asked. "Mrs. Gilson, is it you?"

"Be good enough," the landlady answered, "to let me come in a minute, miss."

Her peremptory tone astonished Henrietta, who said neither Yes nor No, but stood staring. The landlady with little ceremony took leave for granted. She entered, went by the girl to the window, and dragging the curtains aside let in the full light. The adventures of the night had left Henrietta pale. But at this her colour rose.

"What is it?" she repeated.

"You know best," Mrs. Gilson answered with more than her usual curtness. "Deal of dirt and little profit, I'm afraid, like Brough March fair! It's not enough to be a fool once, it seems! Though I'd have thought you'd paid pretty smartly for it. Smart enough to know better now, my lass!"

"I don't know what you mean," Henrietta faltered.

"You don't?" Mrs. Gilson rejoined, and with her arms set akimbo she stared severely at the girl, who, in her night-clothes, with her cloak thrown about her, and her colour coming and going, looked both guilty and frightened. "I fancy your face knows, if you don't. Where were you last night? Ay, after dark last night, madam? Where were you, I say?"

"After dark?" Henrietta stammered.

"Ay, after dark!" the landlady retorted. "That's English, isn't it? But never mind. Least said is soonest mended. Where are your shoes?"

"My shoes?"

Mrs. Gilson lost patience, or appeared to lose it.

"That is what I said," she replied. "You give them to me, and then I'll tell you why I want them. Ah!"—catching sight of them and bending her stout form to lift them from the floor. "Now, if you want to know what is the matter, though I think you know, as well as the miller knows who beats the meal sack—you come with me! There is no one on this landing. Come you, as you are, to the window at the other end. And you'll know fast enough, and why they want your shoes."

"They?" Henrietta murmured, hanging back and growing more alarmed. It was a pity that there was no man there to see how pretty she looked in her disorder.

"Ay, they!" the landlady answered. And a keen ear might have detected sorrow as well as displeasure in her tone. "There's a many will be poking their noses into your affairs now you'll find—when it's too late to prevent them. But do you come, young woman!" She led the way along the landing to a window which looked down on the side-garden. After a brief hesitation Henrietta followed, her face grown

sullen. Alas! when she reached the window it needed but a look to enlighten her.

One of the things, which she had feared the previous day, had come to pass! A little snow had fallen while she was absent from the house; so very little that she had not noticed it. But it had lain, and on its white surface was published this morning in damning characters the story of her flittings to and fro. And worse, early as it was, the story had readers! Leaning on the garden wicket were two or three men discussing the appearances, and pointing and arguing; and forty or fifty yards along the road towards Bowness, a man, bent double, was tracing the prints of her feet as if he followed a scent.

It was for that, then, that they wanted her shoes. She understood, and her first impulse was to indignation. It was an outrage! An insult!

"What is it to them?" she cried. "How dare they!"

Mrs. Gilson looked keenly at her under her vast bushy eyebrows.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that you'll find they'll dare a mort more than that before they've done, my girl. And what they want to know they'll learn. These," coolly lifting the shoes to sight, "are to help them."

"But why should they—what is it to them if I——" she stopped, unwilling to commit herself.

"You listen to me a minute," the landlady said. "You've brought your pigs to a poor market, that's plain: and there is but one thing can help you now, and that is a clean breast. Now you make up your mind to it! There's nought else can help you, I say again, and that I tell you! It's no child's play, this! The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as they say at the assizes, is the only thing for you, if you don't want to be sorry for it all the rest of your life."

She spoke so seriously that Henrietta when she answered took a lower tone; though she still protested.

"What is it to any one," she asked, "if I was out of the house last night?"

"It's little to me," Mrs. Gilson answered drily. "But it

will be much to you if you don't tell the truth. Your own conscience, my girl, should speak loud enough."

"My conscience is clear!" Henrietta cried. But her tone, a little too heroic, fitted ill with her appearance.

At any rate Mrs. Gilson, who did not like heroics, thought so. "Then the best thing you can do," she replied tartly, "is to go and dress yourself! A clear conscience! Umph! Give me clean hands! And if I were you I'd be quite sure about that conscience before I came down to answer questions."

"I shall not come down."

"Then they'll come up," the landlady retorted. "And 'twon't be more pleasant. You'd best think twice about that."

Henrietta was thinking. Behind the sullen, pretty face she was thinking that if she made a clean breast of it, she must betray the man. She must say where she had seen him, and why she had gone to meet him. And that was the thing which she had resolved not to do—the thing which she was still determined not to do. There is a spice of obstinacy in all women: an inclination to abide by a line once taken, or an opinion once formed. And Henrietta, who was naturally headstrong, and who had run some risk the previous night and gone to some trouble that the man might escape, was not going to give him up to-day. They had found her out, they had driven her to bay. But nothing which they could do would wound her half as much as that public ordeal, that confrontation with the man, that exhibition of his unworthiness and her folly, which must follow his capture. For the man himself, she was so far from loving him, that she loathed him, she was ashamed of him. But she was not going to betray him. She was not going to turn informer—a name more hateful then, when blood-money was common, than now! She who had been kissed by him was not going to have his blood on her hands!

Such were her thoughts; to which Mrs. Gilson had no clue. But the landlady read recalcitrancy in the girl's face, and knowing some things which Henrietta did not know, and

being at no time one to brook opposition, she took the girl the wrong way. If she had appealed to her better feelings, if she had used that influence with her which rough but real kindness had won, it is possible that she might have brought Henrietta to reason. But the sight of that sullen, pretty face provoked the landlady. She had proof of gross indiscretion, she suspected worse things, she thought the girl unworthy. And she spoke more harshly to her than she had ever spoken before.

"If you were my girl," she said grimly, "I'd know what to do with you! I'd shake the humours out of you, if I had to shake you from now till next week! Ay, I would! And you'd pretty soon come to your senses and find your tongue, I warrant! Didn't you pretend to me and maintain to me a week ago and more that you'd done with the scamp?"

"I have done with him!" Henrietta cried, red and angry.

"Ay, as the foot has done with the shoe—till next time!" Mrs. Gilson retorted, drawing her simile from the articles in her hand. "For shame. For shame, young woman!" severely. "When it was trusting to that I kept you here and kept you out of gaol!"

Henrietta had not thought of that side of the case; and the reminder, finding a joint in her armour, stung her.

"You don't know to whom you are talking!" she cried.

"I know that I am talking to a fool!" the landlady retorted. "But there," she continued irefully, "you may talk to a fool till you are dead and 'twill still be a fool! So it's only one bit of advice I'll give you. You dress and come down or you'll be dragged down! And I suppose, though you are not too proud to trapse the roads to meet your Joe—ay," raising her voice as Henrietta turned in a rage, and fled, "you may slam the door, you little vixen, for a vixen you are! But you've heard some of my opinion of you, and you'll hear more! I'm not sure that you're not a thorough bad 'un!" Mrs. Gilson continued, lowering her voice again and speaking to herself—though her words were still audible. "That I'm not! But any way there'll

ee one here by-and-by you'll have to listen to! And he'll nake your ears burn, my lady, or I'm mistaken!"

It was bad enough to hear through the ill-fitting door such words as these. It was worse to know that plainer words might be used downstairs in the hearing of man and maid. But Henrietta had the sense to know that her position would be made worse by avoiding the issue; and pride enough to urge her to face it. She hastened to dress herself, though her fingers shook with indignation as well as with cold.

It was only when she was nearly ready to descend that she noticed how large was the crowd collected before the inn. She could hardly believe that her escapade—much as it might interest the police officer—was the cause of this. And a chill of apprehension, a thrill of anticipation of she knew not what, kept her for a moment standing before the window. She had done, she told herself, no harm. She had no real reason to fear. And yet she was beginning to fear. Anger was beginning to give place to dismay. For it was clear that something out of the common had happened. Besides the group in the road, three or four persons were inspecting the boats drawn up on the foreshore. And on the lake was a stir unusual at this season. Half a mile from the shore a boat under sail was approaching the landing-place from the direction of Wray Woods. It was running fast before the bitter lash of the November wind that here and there flecked the grey and melancholy expanse with breakers. And round the point from the direction of Ambleside a second boat was reaching, with the wind on her quarter. She fancied that the men in these boats made signs to those on the shore; and that the excitement grew with their report. While she gazed two or three of the people in the road walked down to the water. And with a puckered brow, and a face a shade paler than usual, she hesitated; wishing that she knew what had happened or was sure that the stir had not to do with her.

She would have preferred to wait upstairs until the boats arrived. But she remembered Mrs. Gilson's warning. Moreover, she was beginning to comprehend—as men do, and

women seldom do—that there is a force which it is futile to resist—that of the law. Sooner or later she must go down. So taking her courage in both hands she opened her door, and striving to maintain a dignified air she descended the stairs, and made her way along the passage to Mr. Rogers's room.

It was empty, and first appearances were reassuring. Her breakfast was laid and waiting, the fire was cheerful, the room tended to encouragement. But the murmur of excited voices still rose from the highway below, and kept her uneasy : and when she went to the side-window to view the scene of last night's evasion, she stamped her foot with vexation. For where the tracks of feet were clearest they had been covered with old boxes to protect them from the frosty sunshine which the day promised ; and the precaution smacked so strongly of the law and its methods that it had an ill look. Not Robinson Crusoe on his desert island had made a more ridiculous fuss about a footprint or two !

She was still knitting her brows over the device when there came a knock at the door. She turned and confronted Bishop. The man's manner as he entered was respectful enough, but he had not waited for leave to come in. And she had a sickening feeling that he was taking possession of her, that he would not leave her again, that from this time she was not her own. The gravity of the bluff red face did not lessen this feeling. And though she would fain have asked him his business and challenged his intrusion she could not find a word.

" I take it, you'd as soon see me alone, miss," he said. And he closed the door behind him, and stood with his hat in his hand. " You'd best go on with your breakfast, for you look a bit peaky—you're a bit shaken, I expect, by what has happened. But don't you be afraid," with something like a wink, " there's no harm will happen to you if you are sensible. Meanwhile I'll talk to you, by your leave, while you eat. It will save time, and time's much. I suppose," he continued, as she forced herself to take her seat and pour out her tea, " there's no need to tell you, miss, what has happened ? "

She would have given much to prevent her hand shaking, and something to be able to look him in the face. She did succeed in maintaining outward composure; for agitation is more clearly felt than perceived. But she could not force the colour to her cheeks, nor compel her tongue to utterance. And he let her swallow some tea before he repeated his question.

"I suppose there is no need, miss, to tell you what has happened?"

"I do not know"—she murmured—"to what you refer. You must speak more plainly."

"It's a serious matter," he said. He appeared to be looking into his hat, but he was really watching her over its edge. "A serious matter, miss, and I hope you'll take it as it should be taken. For if it goes beyond a point the Lord only can stop it. So if you know, miss, and have no need to be told, it's best for you to be frank. We know a good deal."

The warm tea had given her command of herself.

"If you mean," she said, "that I was out last night, I was."

"We know that, of course."

"You have my shoes," with a shrug of contempt.

"Yes, miss, and your footprints!" he answered. "The point on which we want information—and the sooner we have it the better—is, where did you leave him?"

"Where did I leave—whom?" sharply.

"The person you met."

"I met no one."

The runner shook his head gently. And his face grew longer.

"For God's sake, miss," he said earnestly, "don't fence with me. Don't take that line! Believe me, if you do you'll be sorry. Time's the thing. Tell us now and it may avail. Tell us to-morrow and it may be of no use. The harm may be done."

She stared at him. "But I met no one," she said.

"There are the footprints, coming and going," he answered with severity. "It is no use to deny them."

"A man's—with mine?"

"For certain."

She looked at him with a startled expression. But gradually her face cleared, she smiled.

"Ah," she said. "Just so. You have the man's tracks coming and going? And mine?"

He nodded.

"But are not his tracks as well as mine more faint as they go from the house? More clear as they come back to the house? Because snow was falling while I was out—began to fall, I think, as soon as I started. So that he as well as I went from the house and returned to the house!"

He frowned. "I noticed that," he said.

"Then," with a faint ring of amusement in her tone, "you had better search the house for him."

The difficulty had occurred to Mr. Bishop before he entered. But it did not fall in with his theory, and like many modern discoverers he had set it on one side as a detail which events would explain. Put to him crudely it vexed him.

"See here, miss, you're playing with us," he said. "And it won't do. Tell us frankly——"

"I will tell you frankly," she answered, cutting him short with spirit, "whose tracks they are. They are Mr. Sutton's. Now you know. And Mr. Sutton is the only person I saw last night. Now you know that too. And perhaps you will leave me." She rose as she said the last word.

"Mr. Sutton was with you?"

"I have said so. You have my shoes. Get his. What I say is easily tested and easily proved."

She had the pleasure of a little triumph. The runner looked taken aback and ashamed of himself. But after the first flush of astonishment he did not waste a minute. He turned, opened the door, and disappeared.

Henrietta listened to his departing steps, then with a sigh of relief she returned to her breakfast. Her spirits rose. She felt that she had exaggerated her troubles; she had allowed herself to be alarmed without cause. The landlady's rudeness, rather than any real perplexity or peril, had imposed

in her. Another time she would not be so lightly frightened. For, after all, she had done nothing of which even Mr. Sutton, if he told the truth, could make much. They might suspect that she had stolen out to meet Walterson; but as she had not met him, they could prove nothing. They might conclude from it, that he was in the neighbourhood; but as Bishop already held that belief, things were left where they were. Except, to be sure, that for some reason she had lost the landlady's favour.

The girl had arrived at this comfortable stage in her reasoning when the shuffling of feet along the passage informed her that Bishop was returning. Nor Bishop only. He brought with him others, it was clear, and among them one heavy man in boots—she caught the ring of a spur. Who were they Why were they coming? Involuntarily she rose to her feet, and waited with a quickened heart for their appearance.

The sounds that heralded them were not encouraging. One of the men stumbled, and growled an oath; and one laughed a vulgar common laugh as at some jest in doubtful taste. Then the door opened wide, and with little ceremony they followed one another into the room, one, two, three.

Bishop first, with his bluff, square face. Then a stranger, a tall bulky man, heavy-visaged and bull-dog jawed, with harsh, over-bearing eyes. He wore an open horseman's coat, and under it a broad leather belt with pistols; and he touched his brow with his whip-handle in a half familiar, half insolent, way. After him came the pale, peaky face of Mr. Sutton, who looked chap-fallen and ashamed of himself.

The moment all had entered,

"Mr. Chaplain, close the door," said the stranger in a broad Lancashire accent, and with an air of authority. "Now, Bishop, suppose you tell the young lady—damme, what's that?" turning sharply, "Who is it?"

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. JOSEPH NADIN

THE words were addressed to Mr. Sutton, who did not seem able to shut the door. But the answer came from the other side of the door.

"By your leave"—the voice, a little breathless, was Mrs. Gilson's—"I'm coming in too." And she came in at that and brusquely. "I think you are over many men for one woman," she continued, setting her cap straight, and otherwise not a whit discomposed by the men's attitude. "You'll want me before you are done, you'll see."

"Want you?" the strange man answered with sarcasm. "Then when we want you we'll send for you."

"No you'll not, Joe Nadin." she retorted coolly, as she closed the door behind her. "For I'll be here. What you will be wanting," with a toss of her double chin, "will be wit. But that's not to be had for the sending."

Nadin—he was the deputy-constable of Manchester, and the most famous police officer of that day, a man as warmly commended by the Tory party as he was fiercely hated by the Radicals—would have given an angry answer. But Bishop was before him.

"Let her be," he said—with friendly deference. "We may want her, as she says. And the young lady is waiting. Now, miss," he continued, addressing Henrietta, who stood at the table trying to hide the perturbation which these preliminaries caused her, "I've brought Mr. Sutton to tell us in your presence what he knows. I doubt it won't go far. So that when we have heard him we shall want a good deal from you."

"Ay, from you, young lady," the Manchester man struck taking the word out of the other's mouth. "It will be ur turn then. And what we want we must have, or——"

"Or what?" she asked, with an air of dignity that sat angely on one so young. They did not guess how her heart ss beating!

"Or 'twill be Appleby gaol!" he answered. "That's the g and the short of it. There's an end of shilly-shallying! u've to make your choice, and time's precious. But the erend gentleman has first say. Speak up, Mr. Chaplain! u followed this young lady last night about ten o'clock? ry good. Now what did you see and hear?"

Mr. Sutton looked miserably downcast. But he was on the rns of a dilemma, and while he knew that by speaking he ffeited all chance of Henrietta's favour, he knew that he ust speak: that he had no choice. Obstinate as he could upon occasion, in the grasp of such a man as Nadin he ccumbed. He owned that not the circumstances only but e man were too strong for him. Yet he made one effort to and on his own legs. "I think Miss Damer would prefer tell the tale herself," he said, with a spark of dignity.

In that case I have nothing to say."

"I do not know what you mean," Henrietta answered, her curling. And she looked at him as she would have looked Judas.

"Still," he murmured, with a side-glance at Nadin, "if you ould be advised by me——"

"I have nothing to say," she said curtly.

"Mind you, I've told her nothing," Mrs. Gilson said, intervening in time to prevent an outburst on Nadin's part. I was bid to get her shoes, and I got her shoes. I held my ngue."

"Then she knows nothing!" the chaplain exclaimed.

"Oh, she knows enough," Nadin struck in, his harsh, ogmatic nature getting the better of him. "If she did not now we should not come to her. We know our business. ow, where's the man hiding? For there the boy will be. Where did you leave him, my lass?"

Mr. Sutton, whom circumstances had forced into a part so distasteful, saw a chance of helping the girl; and even of reinstating himself in her eyes.

"I can answer that," he said. "She did not meet him. The young lady went to the bottom of Troutbeck Lane, where, I understand, the boat came to land. But there was no one there to meet her. And she came back without seeing any one. I can vouch for that. And that," the chaplain continued, throwing out his chest, and speaking with dignity, "is all that Miss Damer did, and I can speak to it."

Nadin exploded.

"Don't tell me that she went to the place for nothing, man!"

"I tell you only what happened," the chaplain answered, sticking to his point. "She saw no one, and spoke to no one."

"Hang me if I don't think you are in with her!" Nadin replied in an insulting tone. And then turning to Henrietta, "Now then, out with it! Where is he?"

But Henrietta, battered by the man's coarse voice and manner, still held her ground.

"If I knew I should not tell you," she said.

"Then you'll go to Appleby gaol!"

"And still I shall not tell you."

"Understand! Understand!" Nadin replied. "I've a warrant here granted in Lancashire and backed here and in order! A warrant to take him. You can see it if you like. Don't say I took advantage of you. I'm rough, but I'm square," he continued, his broad dialect such that a Southerner would not have understood him. "The lads know me, and you'll know me before we've done!"

"Then it won't be for your wisdom!" Mrs. Gilson muttered. And then more loudly, "Why don't you tell her what's been done? Happen she knows, and happen she doesn't. If she does, 'tis all one. If she doesn't, you're talking to deaf ears."

Nadin shrugged his shoulders and struck his boot with his whip.

"Well," he said, "an old lass with a long tongue will have her way i' Lancashire or where it be! Tell her yourself. But she knows, I warrant!"

Mrs. Gilson also thought so, but she was not sure.

"See here, miss," she said, "you know Captain Clyne's son?"

Henrietta's colour rose at the name.

"Of course you do," the landlady continued, "for if all's true you are some sort of connection. Then you know, miss, that he's the apple of his father's eye, and the more for being a lameter?"

Henrietta stared. She could not hear Anthony Clyne's name without agitation; without a sense of coming evil. Why did they bring in the name? And what were they going to tell her about the boy—the boy of whom in the old days she had been contemptuously jealous? She felt her face burn under the gaze of all those eyes fixed on it. And her own eyes sank.

"Well," she muttered indistinctly, "what of him? What has he to do with this?"

"He is missing. He has been stolen."

"Stolen? The boy?"

Her tone was one of sharp surprise.

"He was carried off last night by two men," Bishop struck in. "His nurse was returning to the house near Newby Bridge—hard on nightfall, when she met two men on the road. They asked the name of the place, heard what it was, and asked who the child was. She told them, and they went one way and she another, but before she reached home they overtook her, seized her and bound her, and disappeared with the boy. It was dusk and she might have lain in the ditch and died. But the servants in the house went out when she did not return and found her." He looked at Nadin. "That's so, isn't it?"

"Ay, that's it," the other answered, nodding. "You've got it pat."

"When she could speak, the alarm was given, they raised the country, the men were traced to Newby Bridge. There

we know a boat met them and took them off. And the point, miss, is not so much where they landed, for that we know—'twas at the bottom of Troutbeck Lane!—as where they are now."

She had turned pale and red and pale again, while she listened. Astonishment had given place to horror, and resentment to pity. In women, even the youngest, there is a secret tenderness for children; and the thought of this child, cast lame and helpless into the hands of strangers, and exposed, in place of the care to which he had been accustomed all his life, to brutality and hardships, pierced the crust of jealousy and melted the woman's heart. Her eyes filled with tears, and through the tears indignation burned. For the moment even the insult which Anthony Clyne had put upon her was forgotten. She thought only of the father's misery, his suspense, his grief.

"Oh!" she cried, "the wretches!" And her voice rang bravely. "But—but why are you here? Why do you not follow them?"

Nadin's eyes met Bishop's. He raised his eyebrows.

"Because, miss," he said, "we think there's a shorter way to them. Because we think you can tell us where they are if you choose."

"I can tell you where they are?" she repeated.

"Yes, miss. We believe that you can—if you choose. And you *must* choose."

The girl stared. Then slowly she comprehended. She grasped the fact that they addressed the question to her, that they believed that she was at one with the men who had done this. And a change as characteristic of her nature as it was unexpected by those who watched her, swept over her face. Her features quivered, and, even as when Anthony Clyne's proposal wounded her pride to the quick, she turned from them and bowing her head on her hands broke into weeping.

They were all taken aback. They had looked some for one thing, some for another; some for rage and scorn, some for sullen denial. No one had foreseen this breakdown. Nor was

welcome. Nadin found himself checked on the threshold
success, and swore under his breath. Bishop, who had
roken a lance with her before, and was more or less tender-
earted, looked vexed. Mr. Sutton showed open distress—her
reeping hurt him, and at every quiver of her slight, girlish
gure he winced. While Mrs. Gilson frowned; perhaps at
he clumsiness and witlessness of men-folk. But she did not
nterfere, and the chaplain dared not interfere: and Nadin
vas left to deal with the girl as he pleased.

"There, miss," he said, speaking a little less harshly, "tears
nend no bones. And there's one thing clear in this and not
o be denied—the men who have taken the lad are friends of
our friend. And not a doubt he's in it. We've traced them
o a place not three hundred yards from here. They've
anished where he vanished, and there's no need of magic to
ell that the same hole hides all. I was on the track of the
nen with a warrant—for they are d——d Radicals as ever
were!—when they slipped off and played this pretty trick
by the way. Whether they have kidnapped the lad out of
evenge, or for a hostage, I'm in the dark. But put-up job
r not, you are not the young lady to back up such doings.
can see that with half an eye," he added cunningly, "and
herefore——"

"Have you got it from her?"

Nadin turned with a frown—the interruption came from
Mr. Hornyold. The justice had just entered and stood
booted, spurred, and pompous on the threshold. He carried
his heavy riding-whip and was in all points ready for the
oad.

"No, not yet," Nadin answered curtly, "but——"

"You'd better let me try her, then," the magistrate re-
oined, all fussiness and importance. "There's no time to
e lost. We're getting together. I've a dozen mounted men
n the yard and they are coming in from Rydal side. We
hall have two score in an hour. We'll have the hills scoured
before nightfall, and long before Captain Clyne's here."

"Quite so. squire," Nadin replied drily. "But if the
young lady will tell us where the scoundrel lies we'll be

spared the trouble. Now, miss," he continued, forgetting, under the impetus of Hornyold's manner, the more diplomatic line he had been following, " we've a d——d clear case against you, and that's flat. We can trace you to where they landed last night, and we know that you were there within a few minutes of the time ; for we've their footsteps from the boat to the wood above the road, and your footsteps from the boat to the inn. There is as much evidence of aiding and abetting as would transport a dozen men ! So do you be wise, and tell us straight off what we want."

But two words had caught her ear.

" Aiding and abetting ? " she muttered. And she turned her eyes, still bright with tears, upon him. Her flushed face and ruffled hair gave her a strangely childish appearance. " Aiding and abetting ? Do you mean that you think that I—that I had anything to do with taking the child ? "

" No, no," Bishop murmured hurriedly, and cast a warning look at his colleague. " No, no, not knowingly."

" Nay, but that depends," Nadin persisted obstinately. His fibre was coarser, and his perceptions were less acute. It was his habit to gain his ends by fear, and he was unwilling to lose the hold he had over her. " That depends," he repeated doggedly. " If you speak and tell us all you know, of course not. But if you do not speak, we shall take it against you."

" You will take it," she cried, " that I—I helped to steal the child ? "

" Just so, if you don't speak," Nadin repeated, disregarding his fellow's signals. Firmness, he was sure, was all that was needed. Just firmness.

She was silent in great agitation. They suspected her ! Oh, it was wicked, it was vile of them ! She would not have touched a hair of the child's head. And they suspected Walterson ; but it might be as falsely, it must be as falsely. Yet if she gave him up, even if he were innocent he would suffer. He would suffer on other charges, and she would have his blood on her hands, though she had so often, so often, resolved that she would not be driven to that !

They asked too much of her. They asked her to betray the man to death on the chance—and she did not believe in the chance—that it would restore the child to its father. She shuddered as she thought of the child, as she thought of Anthony Clyne's grief; she would willingly have done much to help the one and the other. But they asked too much. If it were anything short of the man's life that they asked, she would be guided, she would do as they bade her. But this step was irrevocable: and she was asked to take it on a chance. Possibly they did not themselves believe in the chance. Possibly they made the charge for their own purposes, their aim to get the man into their power, the blood-money into their purse. She shuddered at that and found the dilemma cruel. But she had no doubt which course she must follow. No longer did any thought of herself or of the annoyances of his arrest weigh with her: thought of the child had outweighed all that. But she would not without proof, without clear proof, have the man's blood on her hands.

And regarding them with a pale set face,

"If you have proof," she said, "that he—Walterson—" she pronounced the name with an effort—"was concerned in carrying off the child, I will speak."

"Proof?" Nadin barked.

"Yes," she said. "If you can satisfy me that he was privy to this—I will tell you all I know."

Nadin exploded.

"Proof?" he cried with violence. "Why, by G—d, was he not at the place where we know the men landed? And didn't you expect to meet him there? And at the very hour?"

"He was not there," she cried.

"But——"

"And I was there," she continued, "yet I know nothing. I am innocent."

"Umph! I don't know!" Nadin growled.

"But I do," she replied. "If your proof comes only to that——"

"But the men who took the child are old mates of his!"

"How do you know?" she returned. "You did not see them. They may not be the men you wished to arrest. But," scornfully, "I see what kind of proof you have, and I shall not tell you."

"Come, miss," Bishop said, staying with difficulty Nadin's furious answer. "Come, miss, think! Think again. Think of the child!"

"Oh, sink the child," the Manchester officer struck in. He had seldom been so handled. "Think of yourself!"

"You will send me to prison?" she said.

"By heaven we will!" he answered. And Mr. Hornyold nodded.

"It must be so, then," she replied with dignity. "I shall not speak. I have no right to speak."

They all cried out on her, Bishop and Mr. Sutton appealing to her, Nadin growling oaths, Mr. Hornyold threatening that he would make out the warrant that minute. Only the landlady, with her apron rolled round her arms, stood grim and silent; a looker-on whose taciturnity presently irritated Nadin beyond bearing. "I suppose you think," he said, turning to her. "that you could have handled her better?"

"I couldn't ha' handled her worse!" the landlady replied.

"You think yourself a Solomon!" he sneered.

"A girl of ten's a Solomon to you!" the landlady retorted keenly. "It canna be for this, it surely canna be for this, Joe Nadin, that they pay you money at Manchester, and that 'tis said you go in risk of your life! Why, that Bishop, London chap as he is, is a greybeard beside you. He does know that Bluster is a good dog but Softly is better!"

"Well, as I live by bread I'll have her in the Stone Jug!" he retorted. "And then we'll see!"

"There's another will see before you!" Mrs. Gilson answered drily. "And it strikes me he's not far off. If you'd left her alone for just an hour and seen what his honour Captain Clyne could do with her, you'd have shown your sense!" shrugging her shoulders. "Now, I fear you've spoiled his market, my lad!"

CHAPTER XIX

AT THE FARM

IT was night, and the fire, the one generous thing in the house-place at Starvecrow Farm, blazed fitfully, casting its light now on Walterson's brooding face as he stooped over the heat, now on the huddled shrunken form that filled the farther side of the hearth. As the flames rose and fell, the shadows of the two men danced whimsically behind them. At one moment they sprang up, darkening the whole smoke-grimed ceiling and seeming to menace the persons who gave them birth, at another they sank into mere hop-o'-my-thumbs, lurking in ambush behind the furniture. There was no other light in the room; it was rarely the old skinflint suffered another. And to-night the shutters were closed and barred that even the reflection of the blaze might not be seen without and breed suspicion.

The younger man's face, when the firelight rested on it, betrayed not only his present anxiety, but the deep lines of past fear and brooding. He was no longer spruce and neat and close-shaven; he was no longer the dandy who had turned a feather-head—for there was little in this place to encourage cleanliness. Confinement and suspense had sharpened his features; his eyes were harder and brighter than of old, and the shallow tenderness which had fooled Henrietta no longer floated on their depths. A nervous impatience, a peevish irritability showed in his every movement; whether he raised his hand to silence the old man's crooning, or fell again to biting his nails in moody depression. It was bad enough to be confined in this squalid hole with an imbecile driveller, and to spend long hours without other company

It was worse to know that beyond its threshold the noose dangled, and the peril which he had so long and so cleverly evaded yawned for him.

To do Walterson justice, it was not entirely for his own safety that he was concerned as he sat over the fire and listened—starting at the squeak of a mouse and finding in every sough of the wind the step of a friend or foe. He was a heartless man. He would not have scrupled to ruin the innocent girl who trusted him : nay, in thought and intention he had ruined her as he had ruined others. But he could not face without a shudder what might be happening at this moment by the water-side. He could not picture without shame what, if the girl escaped there, would happen here ; when they dragged her through the doorway, bound and gagged and at the mercy of the jealous vixen who dominated him. Secretly he was base enough to hope that what they did they would do in the darkness, and not terrify him with the sight of it. For if they brought her here, if they confronted him with her, how loathly a figure he must cut even in his own eyes ! How poor and dastardly a thing he must seem in the eyes of the woman whose will he did and to whose vengeance he consented.

The sweat rose on his brow as he pondered this ; as he looked with terrified eyes at the door and fancied that the scene was already playing, that he saw her dragged into that vile place, that he met her look. Passionately he wished—as we all wish in like but smaller cases—that he had never seen either of the women, that he had never played the fool, or that if he must play the fool he had chosen some other direction in which to escape with Henrietta. But wishing was useless. Wishing would not remove him into safety or comfort, would not relieve him from the consequences of his misdeeds, would not convert the skulking imbecile who faced him into decent company. And even while he indulged his regret, he heard the tread of men outside, and he stood up. A moment later the signal, three knocks on the shutter, informed him that the crisis which he had been expecting and dreading, was come—was come !

Delay would not help him; the old man, mowing and chattering, was already on his feet. He went to the door and with a hang-dog face opened it. The long bar which ran all its length into the wall was scarcely clear, when a woman, swaddled to her eyes in a thick drugget shawl, pushed in. It was Bess. After her came a tall man cloaked and booted, followed by two others of lower stature and meaner appearance. The last who entered bore something in his arms, a pack, a bundle—Walterson, shuddering, could not see which. For as Bess with the same show of haste with which she had entered, began to secure the door against the cold blast that blew the sparks in clouds up the chimney, the cloaked man addressed him.

"You're Walterson? Ah, to be sure, we've met—once, I think. Well," he spoke in a harsh, peremptory tone—"you'll be good enough to note," he turned and pointed to the other men, "that I have naught to do with this! I've neither hand nor part in it! And I'll ask you to remember that."

Walterson, with a pallid face and shrinking eyes, looked at the man with the bundle.

"What is it?" he muttered hoarsely. "I don't understand."

"Oh, stow this!" Bess cried, turning brusquely from the door which she had secured. "The gentleman is very grand and mighty," shrugging her shoulders, "but the thing is done now. And I'll warrant if good comes of it he'll not be too proud to take his share."

"Not *I*, girl!" the tall man answered. "Not I!"

He took off as he spoke his cloak and hat, and showed a tall, angular figure borne with military stiffness. His face was sallow and long, and his mouth wide; but the plainness or ugliness of his features was redeemed by the light of enthusiasm which was never long absent from his sombre eyes. A something of aloofness in speech and manner showed that he was in the habit of living among inferiors. And not only the men who came with him, but Walterson himself seemed in his presence of a meaner mould and smaller sort.

His two companions were stout, short-built men of a coarse type. But Walterson, after a single glance, paid no heed to them. His eyes, his thoughts, his attention were all on the bundle. Yet, it was not possible, it could not be what he dreaded. It was too small, too small! And yet he shuddered.

"What is it?" he asked in uncertain accents.

"The worth of a man's neck, maybe," one of the two men grunted.

"Oh, curse your maybes!" the other who carried the child struck in. "It's a smart bit of justice, master, with no maybe about it! And came in our way just when we were ready for it. Let's look at the kid."

"The kid?"

Walterson repeated the words, and opened his mouth dumb-founded. He looked at Thistlewood.

The tall man, who was warming his back at the fire, shrugged his square shoulders.

"I've naught to do with it!" he said. "Ask them!"

"Don't you know what a kid is?" Giles, one of the two others, retorted, with a glance of contempt. "A kinchin! a squeaker! It's Squire Clyne's, if you must know. He'll learn now what it is to see your children trodden under foot and your women-kind slashed and cut with sabres! He's ground the faces of the poor long enough! D——n him, he's as bad as Castlereagh, the devil! But hallo!" breaking off. "If I don't think, mate, you've squeezed his throat a bit too tight!"

He had unwound the wrappings and disclosed the still and inanimate form of a boy about six years old, but small for his age. The thin bloodless hands were clenched, the head hung back, the eyes were half-closed; and the tiny face showed so deathly white—among those tanned faces and in that grimy place—that it was not wonderful that the man fancied for a moment that the child was dead.

But, "Not I!" the one who had carried it answered contemptuously. "It's swooned, like enough. And I'd to stop it shrieking, hadn't I? Let the lass look to it."

Bess took it but reluctantly—with an ill grace and no look of tenderness or pity. She was of those women who love no children but their own, and sometimes do not love their own. While she sprinkled water on the poor little face and rubbed the small hands, Walterson found his voice.

"What folly—what cursed folly is this?" he cried, his words vibrating with rage. "What have we to do with the child or your vengeance, or this d——d folly—that you should bring the hunt upon us? We were snug here."

"And ain't we snug now?" Lunt, the man who had carried the child, asked.

"Snug? We'll be snug behind bars in twenty-four hours!" Walterson rejoined, his voice rising almost to a scream, "if that child is Squire Clyne's child!"

"Oh, he's that, right enough, master," Giles, the other man struck in. A kind of ferocious irony was natural to him.

"Then you'll have the whole country on us before noon to-morrow!" Walterson retorted. "I tell you he'll follow you and track you and find you, if he follows you to hell's gate! I know the man."

"So do I," said Thistlewood coolly. "And I say the same."

"Yet," Giles retorted impudently, "you've got a neck as well as another."

"You can leave my neck out of the question," Thistlewood replied. "And me!" And he turned his back on them contemptuously.

"Well, you've got a neck," Giles answered, addressing Walterson, who was almost hysterical with rage. "And I suppose you have some care for it, if he has none!" with a gesture of the thumb in Thistlewood's direction. "You'd as soon as not keep your neck unstretched, I suppose?"

"Sooner," Bess said, flinging a glance of contempt at her lover. "Here, let me teach him," she continued bluntly; the child had begun to murmur in a low, painful note. "They came on the kid by chance and snatched it, and we've put ten miles of water between the place and us."

"And snow on the ground!" Walterson retorted, pointing

to the thin powder that still lay white in the folds of her shawl.

"We came up through the wood," she answered. "Trust us for that! But that's not the point. The point is, that your pink-and-white fancy-girl never came. She'd more sense than I thought she had. But you were willing to snatch her, my lad. And why is the risk greater with the child?"

"But——"

"It's less," the girl continued, before he could put his objection into words. "It's less, I tell you, for the child's more easily tucked away. I've a place we can put it, where they'll not find it if they search for a twelve-month!"

"They'll soon search here," he said sullenly. "There's not a house they'll not search if they trace the boat. Nor a bothy on the hills."

"May be," she answered confidently. "But when they search you'll not be here, nor the kid. Nor in a bothy!"

"If you are going to trust Tyson——"

"You leave that to me," she replied, bending her brows.

But he was not to be silenced.

"He'll sell you!" he cried. "He'll sell you! He'll give you fair words and you think you can fool him. But when he comes to know that there's a reward out, and what he'll suffer if he is found hiding us, and when he knows that all the country is up—and for this child they'd hang us on the nearest tree—he'll give us up and you too. Though you do think you have bewitched him. And so I tell all here!" he added passionately.

With a dark look, "Stow it, my lad," she said, as he paused for want of breath. "And leave Tyson to me."

But the men who had listened to the debate looked something startled. They glanced at one another, and at last Thistlewood spoke.

"Is this Tyson," he asked, "the man at whose house you said we should be better than here, my girl?"

"That's him," Bess answered curtly.

"Well, it seems to me that you ought to tell us a bit more. I don't want to be sold."

"I am of that way of thinking myself, captain," Lunt growled. "If the man has no finger between the jamb and the door, you can't be sure that he won't shut it. No, curse me, you can't! There's other Olivers besides him who has sold a round dozen of us to Government. I'll slit the throat of the first police spy that comes in my way!"

"And yet you trust me!" the girl flung at him, her eyes scornful. To her they all, all seemed cowards.

"Ay, but you are a woman," Giles answered. "And though I'm not saying there's no Polly Peachums, I've not come across them. Treat a maid fair and she'll treat you fair, that's the common way of it. She'll not stretch you, for anything short of another wench. But a man! He's here and there and nowhere."

"That's just where this man is," she answered curtly.

"Where?"

"Nowhere."

"What do you mean?"

"He's cut his lucky. He's gone to Carlisle to see his brother and keep his skin safe—for a week. He's like a good many more I know," with a glance which embraced every man in the room: "willing to eat but afraid to bite."

"But he has left his house?"

"That's it."

"And who's in it?"

"His wife, no one else. And she's bedridden with a babby, seven days old."

"What! And no woman with her?"

"There was," Bess answered, "but there isn't. I quarrelled with the serving-lass this afternoon, and at sunset to-day she was to go. If she comes back to-morrow I'll send her packing with a flea in her ear!"

"But who——"

"Gave me leave to send her?" defiantly. "He did."

Thistlewood smiled.

"And the wife?" he asked. "What'll she say?"

"Say? She'd not say boh to a goose if it hissed at her!" Bess answered contemptuously. "She's a pale, fat cater-

pillar, afraid of her own shadow! She'll whine a bit, for she don't love me—thinks I'll poison her some fine day for the sake of her man. But she's upstairs and there's no one, but nor ben, to hear her whine; and at daybreak I'll be there, tending her. Isn't it the natural thing," and she smiled darkly, "with this the nearest house?"

"Curse me, but you're a clever lass!" Giles cried. And even Thistlewood seemed to feel no pity for the poor woman, left helpless with her babe. "I don't know," the ruffian continued, "that I'm not almost afraid of you myself!"

"And you think that house will not be searched?"

"Why should it be searched?" Bess answered. "Tyson's well known. And if they do search it," she continued confidently, "there's a place—it's not of the brightest, but it'll do, and you must lie there days—that they'll not find if they search till Doomsday!"

Walterson alone eyed her gloomily.

"And what is the child in this?" he said.

"The kid, my lad? Why, everything. You fine gentlemen can't stay here for ever, and when you go north or south or east or west, the kid'll stay here until you're safe. And if you don't come safe, he's a card you'll be glad to have the use of to clear your necks, my lads!"

Thistlewood turned on his heel again.

"I'll none of it," he said, dark and haughty. "It's no gentleman's game, this!"

"Gentleman be hanged!" cried Giles, and Lunt echoed him. "Do you call"—with temper—"what you were for this morning a gentleman's game? Do you call killing a dozen unarmed men round a dinner-table a gentleman's game?"

"It's our lives against theirs!" Thistlewood answered with a sombre glance "And the odds with them, and a rope if we fail! Wrong breeds wrong," he continued, his voice rising—as if already he spoke in his defence. "Did ministers wait until we were armed before they rode us down at Manchester? or at Paisley? or at Glasgow? No! And, I say, they must be removed, no matter how. They must

be removed! They are the head and front of offence, the head and front of this damnable system under which no man that's worth ten pounds does wrong, and no poor man does right! From King to tradesman they stand together. But kill a dozen at the top, and you stop the machine! You terrify the traders that find the money! You bring over to our side all that is timid and fearful and fond of ease—and that's nine parts of the country! For myself," extending his arms in a gesture of menace, "I'd as soon cut the throats of Castlereagh and Liverpool and Harrowby as I'd cut the throats of so many calves! And sooner, by G—d! Sooner! But for messing with children I'll none of it! I've said my say." And he turned again to the fire.

The girl, as he stirred the logs with his boot-heel, eyed him strangely; and in her heart she approved not his arguments, but his courage. Here was what she had sighed for—a man! Here was what she thought that she had found in Walterson—a man! And Walterson himself approved in his heart; and envied the strong man who dared to speak out where he with his life at stake dared not. The thing *was* cruel, *was* dastardly. But then—it might save his neck! For the others, they were too low, too brutish to be much moved by Thistlewood's words.

"Ah, but we've got necks as well as you!" Giles muttered. "And if we risk 'em to please you, we'll save 'em the way we please!"

Then, "Look at the kid!" Lunt muttered. "He's hearing too much, and picking it up. Stow it for now!"

The girl turned to the child which she had laid on the bed. Thistlewood had knocked the fire together, and the blaze, passing by him, fell upon the wide-open eyes that from the bed regarded the scene with a look of silent terror, a look that seemed uncanny to more than one. Had the boy wept or screamed, or cried for help, had it given way to childish panic and tried to flee, they had thought nothing of it. They had twitched it back, hushed it by blow or threat, and cursed it for a nuisance. But this passive terror, this self-restaint at so tender an age, struck the men as unnatural, and taken

with its small elfish features awoke qualms in the more superstitious.

"Curse the child!" said one, staring at it. "I think it's bewitched!"

"See if it will eat," said another. "Bewitched children never eat."

Some bread was fetched and milk put to it—though Bess set nothing by such notions—and, "You eat that, do you hear!" the girl said. "Or we'll give you to that old man there," pointing with an undutiful finger to the squalid figure of the old miser. "And he'll take you to his bogey-hole!"

The child shook pitifully, and the fear in its eyes deepened as it regarded the loathsome old man. With a sigh that seemed to rend the little heart, it took the iron spoon, and strove to swallow. The spoon tinkled violently against the bowl.

"I'll manage him," Bess said with a look of triumph. "You will see, I'll have him so in two days that he'll not dare to say who he is, if they do find him! You leave him to me, and I'll sort the little imp!"

Perhaps the child knew that he had fallen among his father's enemies. Perhaps he knew only that in a second his world was overset and he cast on the mercy of the ogres he saw about him. As he looked fearfully round the gloomy, fire-lit room with its lights and black shadows, a single large tear rolled from each eye and fell into the coarse earthen-ware bowl. And for an instant he seemed about to choke. Then he went on eating.

CHAPTER XX

PROOF POSITIVE

ANTHONY CLYNE had made no moan, but, both in his pride and his better feelings, he had suffered more than the world thought through Henrietta's elopement. He was not in love with the girl whom he had chosen for his second wife and the mother of his motherless child. But no man likes to be jilted. No man, even the man least in love, can bear with indifference or without mortification the slur which the woman's desertion casts on him. At best there are invitations to be cancelled, and servants to be informed, and plans to be altered; the condolences of some and the smiles of others are to be faced. And many troubles and much bitterness. The very boy, the apple of his eye and the core of his heart, had to be told—something.

And Anthony Clyne was proud. No man in Lancashire set more by his birth and station, or had a stronger sense of his personal dignity; so that in doing all these things he suffered. He suffered much. Nor did it end with that. His own world knew him, and took care not to provoke him by a tactless word or an inquisitive question. But the operatives in his neighbourhood, who hated him and feared him, and thanked God for aught that hurt him, gibed him openly. Taunts and jests were flung after him in the streets of Manchester; and men whose sweethearts had been trodden down or roughly used on the day of Peterloo inquired after his sweetheart as he passed before the mills.

But he made no sign. And no one dreamed that the suffering went farther than the man's pride, or touched his heart. Yet it did. Not that he loved the girl; but because

she was of his race, and because her own branch of the family cast her off, and because the man with whom she had fled could do nothing to protect her from the consequences of her folly. For these reasons—and a little because of a secret nobility in his own character—he suffered vicariously; he felt himself responsible for her. And the responsibility seemed more heavy after he had seen her; after he had borne away from Windermere the picture of the girl left pale and proud and lonely by the lake side.

For her figure haunted him. It rose before him in the most troublesome fashion and at the most improper times: at sessions when he sat among his peers, or at his dinner-table in the middle of a tirade against the radicals and Cobbett. It touched him in the least expected and most tender points; awaking the strongest doubts of himself, and his conduct, and his wisdom that he had ever entertained. It barbed the dart of "It might have been" with the rankling suspicion that he had himself to thank for failure. And where at first he had said in his haste that she deserved two dozen, he now remembered her defence, and added gloomily, "Or I! Or I!" The thought of her fate—as of a thing for which he was responsible—thrust itself upon him in season and out of season. He could not put her out of his mind, he could not refrain from dwelling on her. And thinking in this way he grew every day less content with the scheme of life which he had framed for her in his first contempt of her. The notion of her union with Mr. Sutton, good, worthy man as he deemed the chaplain, now jarred on him unpleasantly. And more and more the scheme showed itself in another light than that in which he had viewed it.

Such was his state of mind, unsettled if not unhappy, and harassed if not remorseful, when a second thunderclap burst above his head, and in a moment destroyed even the memory of these minor troubles. He loved his child with the love of the proud and lonely man who loves more jealously where others pity, and clings more closely where others look askance. A fig for their pity! he cried in his heart. He would so rear his child, he would so cherish him, he would so foster his mind,

that in spite of bodily defect this latest of the Clynes should be also the greatest. And while he foresaw this future in the child and loved him for the hope, he loved him immeasurably more for his weakness, his helplessness, his frailty in the present. All that was strong in the man of firm will and stiff prejudice went out to the child in a passionate yearning to protect it; to shield it from unfriendly looks, even from pity; to cover it from the storms of the world and of life.

Personally a brave man Clyne feared nothing for himself. The hatred in which he was held by a certain class came to his ears from time to time in threatening murmurs, but though those who knew best were loudest in warning, he paid no heed. He continued to do what he held to be his duty. Yet if anything had been able to turn him from his path it had been fear on his son's account; it had been the very, very small share which the boy must take in his peril. And so, at the first hint, he had removed the child from the zone of trouble, and sent him to a place which he fancied safe; a place which the boy loved, and in the quiet of which health as well as safety might be gained. If the name of Clyne was hated where spindles whirled and shuttles flew, and men lived their lives under a pall of black smoke, it was loved in Cartmel by farmer and shepherd alike; and not less by the rude charcoal-burners who plied their craft in the depths of the woods about Staveley and Broughton in Furness.

On that side he thought himself secure. And so the blow fell with all the force of the unexpected. The summons of the panic-stricken servants found him in his bed; and it was a man who hardly contained himself, who hardly contained his fury and his threats, who without breaking his fast rode north. It was a hard-faced, stern man who crossed the sands at Cartmel at great risk—but he had known them all his life—and won at Carter's Green the first spark of comfort and hope which he had had since rising. Nadin was before him. Nadin was in pursuit—Nadin, by whom all that was Tory in Lancashire swore. Surely an accident so opportune, a stroke of mercy and providence so unlikely—for the odds

against the officer's presence were immense—could not be unmeant, could not be for nothing! It seemed, it must be of good augury! But when Clyne reached his house in Cartmel, and the terrified nurse, who knew the depth of his love for the boy, grovelled before him, the household had no added hope to give him, no news or clue. And he could but go forward. His horse was spent, but they brought him a tenant's colt, and after eating a few mouthfuls he pressed on up the lake side towards Bowness, attended by a handful of farmers' sons who had not followed on the first alarm.

Even now, hours after the awakening, and when any moment might end his suspense, any turn in the road bring him face to face with the issue—good or bad, joy or sorrow—he dared not think of the child. He dared not let his mind run on its fear or its suffering, its terrors in the villains' hands, or the hardships which its helplessness might bring upon it. To do so were to try his self-control too far. And so he thought the more of the men, the more of vengeance, the more of the hour which would see him face to face with them, and see them face to face with punishment. He rejoiced to think that abduction was one of the two hundred crimes which were punishable with death: and he swore that if he devoted his life to the capture of these wretches they should be taken. And when taken, when they had been dealt with by judge and jury, they should be hanged without benefit of clergy. There should be no talk of respite. His services to the party had earned so much as that—even in these days when radicals were listened to over much, and fanatics like Wolseley and Burdett flung their wealth into the wrong scale.

At Bowness there was no news except a word from Nadin bidding him ride on. And without alighting he pressed on, sternly silent, but with eyes that tirelessly searched the bleak, bare fells for some movement, some hint of flight or chase. He topped the hill beyond Bowness, and drew rein an instant to scan the islets set here and there on the sullen water. Then, after marking carefully the three or four boats which were afloat, he trotted down through Calgarth woods. And on

turning the corner that revealed the long-gabled house at the Low Wood landing he had a gleam of hope. Here at last was something, some stir, some adequate movement. In the road were a number of men, twenty or thirty, on foot or horseback. A few were standing, others were moving to and fro. Half of them carried Brown Besses, blunder-busses, or old horse-pistols, and three or four were girt with ancient swords lugged for the purpose from bacon-rack or oak chest. The horses of the men matched as ill as their arms, being of all heights and all degrees of shagginess, and some riders had one spur, and some none. But the troop meant business, it was clear, and Anthony Clyne's heart went out to them in gratitude. Hitherto he had ridden through a country-side heedless or ignorant of his loss, and of what was afoot; and the tardy intelligence, the slow answer, had tried him sorely. Here at last was an end of that. As the honest dalesmen, gathered before the inn, hauled their hard-mouthed beasts to the edge of the road to make way for him, and doffed their hats in silent sympathy, he thanked them with his eyes.

In spite of his empty sleeve he was off his horse in a moment.

"Have they learned anything?" he asked, his voice harsh with suppressed emotion.

The nearest man began to explain in the slow northern fashion. "No, not as yet, your honour. But we shall, no doubt, i' good time. We know that they landed here in a boat."

"Ay, your honour, have no fear!" cried a second. "We'll get him back!"

And then Nadin came out.

"This way, if you please, Squire," he said, touching his arm and leading him aside. "We are just starting to scour the hills, but——" he broke off and did not say any more until he had drawn Clyne out of earshot.

Then, "It's certain that they landed here," he said, turning and facing him. "We know that, Squire. And I fancy that they are not far away. The holt is somewhere near, for it is here we lost the other fox. I'm pretty sure that if we search the hills for a few hours we'll light on them. But

that's the long way. And damme!" vehemently, "there's a short way if we are men and not mice."

Clyne's eyes gleamed.

"A short way?" he muttered. In spite of Nadin's zeal the Manchester officer's manner had more than once disgusted his patron. It had far from that effect now. The man might swear and welcome, be familiar, be what he pleased, if he would also act! If he would recover the child from the cruel hands that held it! His very bluntness and burliness and sufficiency gave hope. 'A short way?" Clyne repeated.

Nadin struck his great fist into the other palm.

"Ay, a short way!" he answered. "There's a witness here can tell all we want if she will but speak. I am just from her. A woman who knows and can set us on the track if she chooses! And we'll have but to ride to covert and take the fox."

Clyne laid his hand on the other's arm.

"Do you mean," he asked huskily, struggling to keep hope within bounds, "that there is some one here—who knows where they are?"

"I do!" Nadin answered with an oath. "And knows where the child is. But she'll not speak."

"Not speak?"

"No, she'll not tell. It's the young lady you were here about before, Squire, to be frank with you."

"Miss Damer?" in a tone of astonishment.

"Ay, Squire, she!" Nadin replied. "She! And the young madam knows, d——n her! It's all one business, you may take it from me! It's all one gang! She was at the place where they landed after dark last night."

"Impossible!" Clyne cried. "Impossible! I cannot believe you."

"Ay, but she was. She let herself down from a window when the house had gone to bed that she might get there. Ay, Squire, you may look, but she did. She did not meet them; she was too soon or too late, we don't know which. But she was there, as sure as I am here! And I suspect—though Bishop, who is a bit of a softy, like most of those

London men, doesn't agree—that she was in the thing from the beginning, Squire! And planned it, may be, but you'd be the best judge of that. Any way, we are agreed that she knows now. That is clear as daylight!"

"Knows, and will not tell?" Clyne cried. Such conduct seemed too monstrous, too wicked to the man who had strained every nerve to reach his child, who had ridden in terror for hours, trembling at the passage of every minute, grudging the loss of every second. "Knows, and will not tell!" he repeated. "Impossible!"

"It's not impossible, Squire," Nadin answered. "We're clear on it. We're all clear on it."

"That she knows where the child is?" incredulously. "Where they are keeping it?"

"That's it."

"And will not say?"

Nadin grinned.

"Not for us," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "She may for you. But she is stubborn as a mule. I can't say worse than that. Stubborn as a mule, Squire!"

Clyne raised his hand to hide the twitching nostril, the quivering lip that betrayed his agitation. But the hand shook. He could not believe that she was privy to this wickedness. But—but if she only knew it now and kept her knowledge to herself—she was, he dared not think what she was! A gust of passion took him at the thought, and whitened his face to the lips. He had to turn away that the coarse-grained, underbred man beside him might not see too much. And a few seconds went by before he could command his voice sufficiently to ask Nadin what evidence he had of this—this monstrous charge. "How do you know—I want to be clear—how do you know," he asked, sternly meeting his eyes, "that she left the house last night to meet them? That she was there to meet them? Have you evidence?" He could not believe that a woman of his class, of his race, would do this thing.

"Evidence?" Nadin answered coolly. "Plenty!" And he told the story of the footprints, and of Mr. Sutton's

experiences in the night; and added that one of the child's woollen mits had been found between the bottom-boards of a boat beached at that spot—a boat which bore signs of recent use. "If you are not satisfied and would like to see his reverence," he continued, "and question him before you see her—shall I send him to you?"

"Ay, send him," Clyne said with an effort. He had been incredulous, but the evidence seemed overwhelming. Yet he struggled, he tried to disbelieve. Not because his thoughts still held any tenderness for the girl, or any remnant of the troublesome feeling that had haunted him; for the shock of the child's abduction had driven such small emotions from his mind. But with the country rising about him, amid this gathering of men upon whom he had no claim, but who asked nothing better than to be brought face to face with the authors of the outrage—with these proofs of public sympathy before his eyes it seemed impossible that a woman, a girl, should wantonly set herself on the other side, and shield the criminals. It seemed impossible. But then, when the first news of her elopement with an unknown stranger had reached him, he had thought that impossible! Yet it had turned out to be true, and less than the fact; since the man was not only beneath her, but a radical and a villain!

"But I will see Sutton," he muttered, striving to hold his rage in check. "I will see Sutton. Perhaps he may have something to say. Perhaps he may be able to put another face on the matter."

The chaplain would fain have done so; more out of generous pity for the girl than out of any lingering hope of ingratiating himself with her. But he did not know what to say, except that though she had gone to the rendezvous she had not seen nor met any one. He laid stress on that, for he had nothing else to plead. But he had to allow that her purpose had been to meet some one; and at the weak attempt to excuse her Clyne's rage broke forth.

"She is shameless!" he cried. "Shameless! Can you say after this that she has given up all dealings with her

over? Though she passed her word, and knows him for a married man?"

The chaplain shook his head.

"I cannot," he said sorrowfully. "I cannot say that. But——"

"She gave her word! To me. To others."

"I allow it. But——"

"But what? What?" with hardly restrained rage. "Will you still, sir, take her side against the innocent? Against the child, whom she has conspired to entrap, to carry off, perhaps to murder?"

"Oh, no, no!" Mr. Sutton cried in unfeigned horror. "That I do not believe! I do not believe that for an instant! I allow, I admit!" he continued eagerly, "that she has been weak, and that she has madly, foolishly permitted this wretch to retain a hold over her."

"At any rate," Clyne retorted, his rage at a white heat, "she has lied to me!"

"I admit it."

"And to others!"

The chaplain could only hold out his hands in deprecation.

"Will you admit, too, that she has continued to communicate with a man she should loathe? A man whom, if she were a modest girl, she would loathe? That she has stolen to midnight interviews with him, leaving this house as a thief leaves it? That she has cast all modesty from her?"

"Do not," Sutton cried, his face flushing hotly, "do not be too hard on her! Captain Clyne, I beg—I beg you to be merciful."

"It is she who is hard on herself! But have no fear," Clyne continued, in a voice cold as the winter fells and as pitiless. "I shall give her fifteen minutes to come to her senses and behave herself,—not as a decent woman, I no longer ask that, but as a woman, any woman, the lowest, would behave herself, to save a child's life. And if she behaves herself—well. And if not, sir, it is not I who will punish her, but the law!"

"She will speak," the chaplain said. "I think she will speak—for you."

He was deeply and honestly concerned for the girl: full of pity for her, though he did not understand her.

"But—suppose I saw her first?" he suggested. "Just for a few minutes? I could explain."

"Nothing that I cannot," Captain Clyne answered grimly. "And for a few minutes! Do you not consider," with a look of suspicion, "that there has been delay enough already? And too much! Fifteen minutes," with a recurrence of the bitter laugh, "she shall have, and not one minute more, if she were my sister!"

Mr. Sutton's face turned red again.

"Remember, sir," he said bravely, "that she was going to be your wife."

"I do remember it!" Clyne retorted with a withering glance. "And thank God for His mercy."

CHAPTER XXI

COUSIN MEETS COUSIN

NADIN and the others had not left her more than ten minutes when Henrietta heard his voice under the window. She was still flushed and heated, sore with the things which they had said to her, bruised and battered by their violence and bluster. Indignation still burned in her; and astonishment that they could not see the case as she saw it. The argument in her own mind was clear. They must prove that Walterson had committed this new crime, they must prove that if she betrayed the man she would save the child—and she would speak. Or she would speak if they would undertake to release the man were he not guilty. But short of that, no. She would not turn informer against him, whom she had chosen in her folly—except to save life. What could be more clear, what more fair, what more logical? And was it not monstrous to ask aught beyond this?

She had wrought herself in truth to an almost hysterical stubbornness on the point. The romantic bent that had led her to the verge of ruin still inclined her feelings. Yet when she heard the father's step approaching along the passage, she trembled. She gazed in terror at the door. The prospect of the father's tears, the father's supplication, shook her. She had to say to herself, "I must not tell, I must not! I must not!" as if the repetition of the words would strengthen her under the torture of his appeal. And when he entered, in the fear of what he might say she was before him. She did not look at him, nor heed what message his face conveyed—or she had been frozen into silence. But in a panic she rushed on the subject.

"I am sorry, oh, I am so sorry!" she cried, tears in her

voice. "I would speak, if I could, I would indeed. But I cannot," distressfully, "I must not! And I beg you to spare me your reproaches."

"I have none to make to you," he said.

It was his tone, rather than his words, which cut her like a whip.

"None!" she cried. "Ah, but you blame me? I am sure you do."

"I do not blame you," he replied in the same cold tone. "My business here has nothing to do with reproaches or with blame. I give you fifteen minutes to tell me what you know, and all you know, of the man Walterson's whereabouts. That told, I have no more to say to you."

She looked at him as one thunderstruck.

"And if I do not do that," she murmured, "within fifteen minutes? If I do not tell you?"

"You will go to Appleby gaol," he said, in the same passionless tone. "To herd with your like, with such women as may be there." He laid his watch on the table, beside his whip and glove; and he looked not at her, but at it.

"And you? You will send me?" she answered.

"I?" he replied slowly. "No, I shall merely undo what I did before. My coming last time saved you from the fate which your taste for low company had earned. This time I stand aside and the result will be the same as if I had never come. There is, let me remind you, a minute gone."

She looked at him, her face colourless, but her eyes undaunted. But the look was wasted, for he looked only at his watch.

"You are come, then," she said, her voice shaking a little, "not to reproach me, but to insult me! To outrage me!"

"I have no thought of you," he answered.

The words, the tone, lashed her in the face. Her nostrils quivered.

"You think only of your child!" she cried.

"That is all," he answered. And then in the same passionless tone, "Do not waste time."

"Do not——"

"Do not waste time!" he repeated. "That is all I have to say to you."

She stood as one stunned; dazed by his treatment of her; shaken to the soul by his relentless, pitiless tone, by his thinly veiled hatred.

He who had before been cold, precise, and just was become inhuman, implacable, a stone. Presently, "Three minutes are gone," he said.

"And if I tell you?" she answered in a voice which though low, vibrated with resentment, "if I tell you what you wish to know, what then?"

"I shall save the child—I trust. Certainly I shall save him from further suffering."

"And what of me?"

"You will escape for this time."

Her breast heaved with the passion she restrained. Her foot tapped the floor, her fingers drummed on the table. Such treatment was not fit treatment for a dog, much less for a woman, a gentlewoman! And his injustice! How dared he! How dared he! What had she done to deserve it? Nothing! No, nothing to deserve this.

Meanwhile he seemed to have eyes only for his watch, laid open on the table before him. But he noted the signs, and he fancied that she was about to break down, that she was yielding, that in a moment she would fall to weeping, perhaps would fall on her knees—and tell him all. A faint surprise, therefore, pierced his pitiless composure when, after the lapse of a long minute, she spoke in a tone that was comparatively calm and decided.

"You have forgotten," she said slowly, "that I am of your blood! That I was to be your wife!"

"It was you who forgot that!" he replied.

She had her riposte ready.

"And wisely!" she answered, "and wisely! How wisely you have proved to me to-day—you,"—with scorn equal to his own—"who are willing to sacrifice me, a helpless woman, on the mere chance of saving your child! Who are willing to send me, a woman of your blood, to prison and to

shame, to herd—you have said it yourself—with such vile women as prisons hold! And that on the mere chance of saving your son! For shame, Captain Clyne, for shame!"

"You are wasting time," he answered. "You have eight minutes."

"You are determined that I shall go?"

"Or speak."

"Will you not hear," she asked slowly, "what I have to say on my side? What reason I have for not speaking? What excuse? What extenuation of my conduct?"

"No," he replied. "Your reasons for speaking or not speaking, your conduct or misconduct, are nothing to me. I am thinking of my child."

"And not at all of me?"

"Not at all."

"Yet listen," she said, with something approaching menace in her tone, "for you will think of me! You will think of me—presently! When it is too late, Captain Clyne, you will remember that I stood before you, that I was alone and helpless, and that you would not hear my reasons nor my excuses. You will remember that I was a girl, abandoned by all, left alone among strangers and spies, without friend or adviser."

"I," he said, coldly interrupting her, "was willing to advise you. But you took your own path. You know that."

"I know," she retorted with sudden passion, "that you were willing to insult me! That you were willing to set me, because I had committed an act of folly, as low as the lowest! So low that all men were the same to me! So low that I might be handed like a carter's daughter who had misbehaved herself, to the first man who was willing to cover her disgrace. That! that was your way of helping me and advising me!"

"In two minutes," he said in measured accents, "the time will be up!"

He appeared to be quite unmoved by her reproaches. His manner was as cold, as repellant, as harsh as ever. But he was not so entirely untouched as he wished her to think. For the time, indeed, his heart was numbed by anxiety, his breast was rendered insensible by the grip of suspense. But

ne barbed arrows of her reproaches stuck and remained. And resently the wounds would smart and rankle, troubling his conscience, if not his heart. It is possible that he had already a suspicion of this. If so, it only deepened his rage and his hostility.

With the same pitiless composure, he repeated, "In two minutes. There is still time, but no more than time."

"You have told me that you do not wish to hear my reasons?"

"For silence? I do not."

"They will not turn you," her voice shook under the maddening sense of his injustice, "whatever they are?"

"No," he answered, "they will not. And having said that I have said all that I propose to say."

"You condemn me unheard?"

"I condemn you? No, the law will condemn you, if you are condemned."

"Then I, too," she answered, with a beating heart—for indignation almost choked her—"have said all that I propose to say. All!"

"Think! Think, girl!" he cried.

She was silent.

He closed his watch with a sharp, clicking sound, and put it in his fob.

"You will not speak?" he said.

"No!"

Then passion, long-restrained, long kept under, swept him away. He took a stride forward, and before she guessed what he would be at, he had seized her wrist, gripping it cruelly.

"But you shall!—you shall!" he cried. His face dark with passion was close to hers, he pressed her a pace backwards. "You vixen! Speak now!" he cried. "Speak!"

"Let me go!" she cried furiously.

"Speak or I will force it from you. Where is he?"

"I will never speak!" she panted, struggling with him, and trying to snatch her arm from him. "I will never speak! You coward! Let me go!"

"Speak or I will break your wrist," he hissed.

He was hurting her horribly. But, "Never! Never! Never!" She shrieked the word at him, her face white with

rage and pain, her eyes blazing. "Never, you coward. You coward! Let me go!"

He let her go then—too late remembering himself. He stepped back. Breathing hard, she leant against the table, and nursed her bruised wrist in the other hand. Her face, an instant before white, now flamed with anger. Never, never since she was a little child had she been so treated, so handled! Every fibre in her was in revolt. But she did not speak. She only, rocking herself slightly to and fro, scathed him with her eyes. The coward! The coward!

And he was as yet too angry—though he had remembered himself and released her—to feel much shame for what he had done. He was too wrapt in the boy and his object to think soberly of anything else. He went, his hand shaking a little, his face disordered by the outbreak, to the bell and rang it. As he turned again,

"Your ruin be on your own head!" he cried.

And he looked at her, hating her, hating her rebellious bearing.

He saw in her, with her glowing cheeks and eyes bright with revolt, the murderess of his boy. What else, since, if it was not her plan, she covered it? Since, if it was not her deed, she would not stay it? She must be one of those feminine monsters, those Brinvilliers, blonde and innocent to the eye, whom passion degraded to the lowest! Whom a cursed infatuation made suddenly most base, driving them to excesses and crimes.

While she, her breast boiling with indignation, her heart bursting with the sense of bodily outrage, of bodily pain, forgot the anguish he was suffering. She forgot the provocation that had exasperated him to madness, that had driven him to violence. She saw in him a cowardly bully, a man cruel, without shame or feeling. She fully believed now that he had flogged a seaman to death. Why not, since he had so treated her? Why not, since it was clear that there was no torture to which he would not resort, if he dared, to wring from her the secret he desired?

And a torrent of words, a flood of scathing reproaches and fierce home-truths, rose to her lips. But she repressed

them. To complain was to add to her humiliation, to augment her shame. To protest was to stoop lower. And strung to the highest pitch of animosity they remained confronting one another in silence, until the door opened and Justice Hornyold entered, followed by his clerk. After these Nadin, Bishop, Mr. Sutton, and two or three more trooped in until the room was half full of people.

It was clear that they had had their orders below, and knew what to expect; for all looked grave, and some nervous. Even Hornyold betrayed by his air, half sheepish and half pompous, that he was not quite comfortable.

"The young lady has not spoken?" he said.

"No," Clyne answered, breathing quickly. He could not in a moment return to his ordinary self. "She refuses to speak."

"You have laid before her reasons?"

He averted his eyes.

"I have said all I can," he muttered sullenly. "I have assured myself that she is privy to this matter, and I withdraw the informal undertaking which I gave a fortnight ago that she should be forthcoming if wanted. Unless, therefore, you are satisfied with the landlord's bail—but that is for you."

Mr. Hornyold shook his head.

"With this new charge advanced?" he said. "No, I am afraid not. Certainly not. But perhaps," looking at her, "the young lady will still change her mind. To change one mind"—with a feeble grin—"is a lady's privilege."

"I shall not tell you anything," Henrietta said, with a catch in her breath. She hid her smarting, tingling wrist behind her. She might have complained; but not for the world would she have let them know what he had done to her, what she had suffered.

Mr. Sutton, who was standing in the background, stepped forward.

"Miss Damer," he said earnestly, "I beg you, I implore you to think."

"I have thought," she answered with stubborn anger, "And if I could help him," she pointed to Clyne, "if I could help him by lifting my finger——"

"Oh, dear, dear!" the chaplain cried, appalled by her vehemence. "Don't say that! Don't say that!"

"What shall I say, then?" she answered—still she remembered herself. "I have told you," she continued, "that I know nothing of the abduction of his child. That is all I have to say."

Hornyold shook his sleek head again.

"I am afraid that won't do," he said. "What"—consulting Nadin with his eye—"what do the officers say?"

Nadin laughed curtly.

"Not by no means, it won't do!" he said. "What she says is slap up against the evidence, sir, and evidence strong enough to hang a man. The truth is, your reverence, the young lady has had every chance, and all said and done we are losing time. And time is more than money! The sooner she is under lock and key the better."

"You apply that she be committed?" Hornyold asked slowly.

"I do, sir."

The justice looked at Bishop.

"Do you join in the application?" he asked.

The officer nodded, but with evident reluctance.

The clerk, who had taken his seat at the corner of the table and laid some papers before him, dipped his pen in the inkhorn, which he carried at his button-hole. He prepared to write. "On the charge of being accessory?' he said in a low voice. "Before or after, Mr. Nadin?"

"Both," said Nadin.

"After," said Bishop.

The clerk looked from one to the other, and then began to write; but slowly, and as if he wished to leave as long as possible a *locus penitentiæ*. It was a feeling shared by all except Captain Clyne. Even the Manchester man, hardened as he was by a rude life in the roughest of towns, had had jobs more to his taste—and wished it done; while the feeling of the greater part was one of pity. The girl was so young, her breeding and refinement were so manifest, her courage so high, she confronted them so bravely, that they were sensible of something cruel in their attitude to her; gathered as they were many to one—and that one a woman with no one

f her sex beside her. They recoiled from the idea of using orce to her. And now it was really come to the point of mprisoning her, those who had a notion what a prison was isliked it most; fearing not only that she might resist removal and cause a heart-rending scene, but still more that he had unknown sufferings before her.

For the prisons of that day were not the prisons of to-day. There was no separation of one class of offenders from another. There were no separate cells, there were rarely even separate beds. Girls awaiting trial were liable to be locked up with the worst women-felons. Nay, the very warders were often old offenders, who had earned their places by favour. In small country prisons, conditions were better, but air, light, space, and cleanliness were woefully lacking. Something might be done, no doubt, to soften the lot of a prisoner of Henrietta's class; but indulgence depended on the whim of the jailor—who at Appleby was a blacksmith!—and could be withdrawn as easily as it was granted.

Suddenly the clerk looked up over his glasses. "The full name," he said, "if you please."

"Henrietta Mary Damer." It was Clyne who spoke.

The clerk added the name, and rising from his seat offered the pen to the magistrate. But Hornyold hesitated. He looked flurried, and something startled.

"But should not——" he murmured, "ought we not to communicate with her brother—with—Sir Charles? He must be her guardian!"

"Sir Charles," Clyne answered, "has repudiated all responsibility. It would be useless to apply to him. I have seen him. And the matter is a criminal matter."

The girl said nothing, but her colour faded suddenly. And in the eyes of one or two she seemed a more pitiful figure, standing alone and mute, than before. But for the awe in which they held Clyne, and their knowledge of his reason for severity, the chaplain and Long Tom Gilson, who was one of those by the door, would have intervened. As it was, Hornyold stooped to the table and signed the form—or was signing it when the clerk spoke.

"One moment, your reverence," he said in a low voice. "The debtors' quarters at Appleby, where they'd be sure to put the young lady, are as good as under water at this time of the year. Kendal's nearer, she'd be better there. And you've power to say which it shall be."

"Kendal, then," Hornyold assented. The name was altered and he signed the committal.

As he rose from the table, constraint fell on one and all. They wondered nervously what was to come next; and it was left to Nadin to put an end to the scene. "Landlord!" he said, turning to the door, "a chaise for Kendal in ten minutes. And send your servant to go with the young lady to her room, and get together what she'll want. You'd best take her, Bishop."

Bishop assented in a low tone, and Gilson went out to give the order. Hornyold said something to Clyne and they talked together in low tones and with averted faces. Then, still talking, they moved to the door and went out without looking towards her. The clerk gathered up his papers, handed one to Bishop, and fastened the others together with a piece of red tape. That done, he, too, rose and followed the magistrate, making her an awkward bow as he passed. Mr. Sutton alone remained, and, pale and excited, fidgeted to and fro; he could not bear to stay, yet he could not bear to leave the girl alone with the officers. Possibly—but to do him justice this went for little—he might by staying commend himself to her, he might wipe out the awkward impression made by the night's adventure. But Clyne put in his head and called him in a peremptory tone; and he had to go with a feeble apologetic glance at her. She was left standing by the table, alone with the officers.

For an instant she looked wildly at the door. Then, "May I go to my room now?" she asked in a low tone.

"Not alone," Nadin answered—but civilly, for him. "In a moment the woman will be here, and you can go with her. It's not quite regular, but we'll stretch a point. But you must not be long, miss! You'll have no need," with a faint grin, "of many frocks, or furbelows, where you're going."

CHAPTER XXII

MR. SUTTON'S NEW RÔLE

WHEN the chaise which carried the prisoner to Kendal had left the inn, and the search parties had gone their way under leaders who knew the country, and the long tail of the last shaggy pony had whisked itself out of sight, a dullness exceeding that of November settled down on the inn by the lake. The road in front ran, a dull, unbroken ribbon, along the water-side; and alone and melancholy the chaplain walked up and down, up and down, the last man left. Occasionally Mrs. Gilson appeared at the door and looked this way and that; but her eye was sombre and her manner did not invite approach or confidence. Occasionally, too, Modest Ann's face was pressed against the window of the coffee-room, where she was setting out the long table against evening; but she was disguised in tears and temper, and before Mr. Sutton could identify the phenomenon, or grasp its meaning, she was gone. The frosty promise of the morning had vanished, and in its place leaden clouds dulled sky and lake, and hung heavy and black on the scarred forehead of Bow Fell. Mr. Sutton looked above and below, and this way and that, and, too restless to go in, found no comfort without. He wished that he had gone with the searchers, though he knew not a step of the country. He wished that he had said more for the girl, and stood up for her more firmly, though to do so had been to quarrel with his patron. Above all, he wished that he had never seen her, never given way to the temptation to aspire to her, never started in pursuit of her—last of all, that he had never stooped to spy on her. He was ill content with himself and

his work; ill content with the world, his patron, everybody, everything. No man was ever worse content.

For Nemesis in an unexpected form was overtaking, nay even as he walked the road, had overtaken the chaplain. He had come to marry, he remained to love; he had come to enjoy, he remained to suffer. He had come, dazzled by the girl's rank and fortune, that rank and that fortune which he had thought so much above himself, and to which her beauty added so piquant and delicate a charm. And, lo, it was neither her rank, nor her fortune, nor her beauty that, as he walked, beat at his heart and would be heard, would have entrance; but the girl's lonely plight and her disgrace and her trouble. On a sudden, as he went helplessly and aimlessly and unhappily up and down the road, he recognised the truth; he knew what was the matter with him. His eyes filled, his feelings overcame him—and no man was ever more surprised. He had to walk a little way down the road before, out of ken of the house, he dared to wipe the tears from his cheeks. Nor even then could he refrain from one or two foolish, unmanly gasps.

"I did not think that I was—such a fool!" he muttered. "Such a fool! I didn't think it!"

When he regained command of himself he found that his feet had borne him to the gate-pillar where so much had happened the previous day. To the very place where he had surprised Henrietta as she arranged her signal, and where she had so nearly surprised him in the act of watching her! In his new-born repentance, in his new-born honesty he hated the place; he hated it only less than he hated the conduct of which it reminded him. And partly out of sentiment, partly out of some unowned notion of doing penance, he turned and slowly retraced her course to the inn, treading as far as possible where she had trodden. When he reached the door he did not go in, but, unwilling to face any one, he went on as far as a seat on the foreshore, where he had seen her sit. And the sentiment of her presence still forming the attraction, he wondered if she had paused there on that morning, or if she had gone indoors at once.

He was so unhappy that he did not feel the cold. The thought of her warmed him, and he sat for a minute or two, with his eyes on the gloomy face of the lake that, towards the farther shore, frowned more darkly under the shadow of the woods. He wished that he understood her conduct better, that he had the clue to it. He wished that he understood her refusal to speak. But right or wrong, she was in trouble and he loved her. Ay, right or wrong! For good or ill! Still he sighed, for all was very dark. And presently he went to rise.

His eyes in the act fell on a few scraps of paper which lay at his feet, and showed the whiter for the general gloom. Letters were not so common then as now. It was much if one person in five could write. The postage on a note sent from the south of England to the north was a shilling; the pages were crossed and recrossed, were often read and cherished long. Paper, therefore, did not lie abroad, as it lies abroad now; and Mr. Sutton—hardly knowing what he did—bent his eyes on the scraps. He was long-sighted, and on one morsel a little larger than its neighbours, he read the word "gate."

In other circumstances he would not ten seconds later have known what words he had read. But at the moment he had the incident of the gate-post in his head—and Henrietta; and he apprehended as in a flash that this might be the summons which had called her forth the previous night—to her great damage. He conceived that after answering it by setting the signal on the gate-post she might have come to this place, and before going into the house might have torn up the letter and scattered the pieces abroad. If so the secret lay at his feet; and if he stooped and took it up, he might help her.

He hung in doubt a few seconds. For he was grown strangely scrupulous. But he reflected that he could destroy the evidence if it bore against her—he would destroy it! And he gave way. Furtively, but with an eager hand, he collected the scraps of paper. There were about a score, the size of dice, and discoloured by moisture, strewn here and there

round the seat. Behind, among the prickly shoots and brown roots of a gorse-bush were as many more, as if she had dropped a handful there. Another dozen he tracked down, one here, one there, in spots to which the wind had carried them. It was unlikely that he had got all, even then. But though he searched as narrowly as he dared—even going on his knees beside the bush—he could find no more. Doubtless the wind had taken toll; and at length, carrying what he had found hidden in his hand, he went into the house and sought refuge in his bedroom.

Eagerly, though he had little hope of finding the result to his mind, he began to arrange the morsels. He found the task less hard than he had anticipated. Guided by the straight edges of the paper, he contrived in eight or nine minutes to piece the letter together; to such an extent, at any rate, as enabled him to gather its drift. About a fifth of the words were missing; and among these missing words were the opening phrase, the last two words, and about a score in the body of the note. But the gist of the message was clear, its tone and feeling survived; and they not only negatived the notion that Henrietta was in league with Walterson, but presented in all its strength the appeal which his prayer must needs have made to the heart of a romantic girl.

" . . . ed you ill, but men are not as women and I was tempted . . . I do not ask . . . forgive . . . I ask you to save me. I am in your hands. If you . . . the heart to leave me to a . . . lent death, all is said. If you have mercy meet my . . . ger at ten to-mor . . . ning . . . Troutbeck lane comes down to the lake. As I hope to live you run no risk and can suffer no harm. If you are merci . . . spare me . . . put a . . . stone, before noon to-morrow, on the post of the . . . gate. . . ."

Strange to say, Mr. Sutton's first feeling, when he had assured himself of the truth, was an excessive, furious indignation against his patron. He forgot, in his pity for the girl, the provocation which Captain Clyne had suffered. He forgot the child's peril and the pressure which this had laid

on the father's feelings. He forgot the light in which the girl's stubborn silence had placed her in the eyes of one who believed that she could save by a word that which he held more precious than his life. The chaplain was a narrow, and in secret a conceited man; he had been guilty of some things that ill became his cloth. But he had under his cloth a heart that once roused was capable of generous passion. And as he stalked up and down the room in a frenzy of love and pity and indignation, he longed for the moment which should see him face to face with Captain Clyne. The letter once shown, he did not conceive that there would be the least difficulty in freeing the girl; and he yearned for the return of the search parties. It was past four already; in the valley it was growing dusk. Yet if Clyne returned soon the girl might be released before night. She might be spared the humiliation, it might well be the misery, of a night in prison.

His room looked to the back of the inn; and here where all the afternoon had been plucking of ducks and fowls, and slicing of flitches—for some of the searchers would need to be fed—lights were beginning to shine and a cheerful stir and a warm promise of comfort to prevail. From the kitchen, where the jacks were turning, firelight streamed across the yard, and pattens clicked, and dogs occasionally yelped; and now and again Mrs. Gilson's voice clacked strenuously. In the heat of his feelings Mr. Sutton compared this outlook with the cold quarters that held his Henrietta; and tears rose anew as he pictured the dank prison yard and the bare stone rooms, and the squalor and the company. After that he could not sit still. He could not wait. He must be acting. He must tell his discovery to some one, no matter to whom. He arranged the letter between the pages of a book and, having arranged it, took the book under his arm and ran downstairs. At the door of her snuggery he came upon Mrs. Gilson, who had just had words with Modest Ann. She eyed him sourly.

"I want to show you something!" he said impetuously, forgetting his fear of her. "I have discovered something, ma'am! A thing of the utmost importance."

She grunted.

"If it has to do with the child," she said grudgingly, "I'll hear it, and thank you."

"It has naught to do with the child," he answered bluntly. "It has to do with Miss Damer."

"Then I'll have naught to do with it!" the landlady retorted with equal bluntness, pursing up her lips and speaking as drily as a file. "I've washed my hands of her."

"But listen to me!" he replied. "Listen to me, Mrs. Gilson! Here's a young lady——"

"That's behaved bad from the beginning—bad!" the landlady answered, cutting him short. "As bad as woman could! A woman, indeed, would have had some heart, and not have left an innocent child in the hands of a parcel of murderous villains! No no, my gentleman, you'll not persuade me. An egg is good or bad, as you find it, and 'tis no good saying that the yolk is good when the white is tainted?"

"But see here, ma'am"—he was bursting with indignation—"you are entirely wrong! Entirely wrong!"

"Then your reverence had best speak to Captain Clyne, for it's not my business!" Mrs. Gilson retorted crushingly. "I'm no scholar and don't meddle with writings." And she turned her broad back upon him and the book which he proffered her.

Mr. Sutton stood a moment in anger equal to his discomfiture. Then he went back to his pacing in the road. After all the woman could do nothing, she was nothing. And the search parties would be returning soon. For night was falling. The last pale daylight was dying on the high fells towards Patterdale; the outlines of the lowlands about the lake were fading into the blur of night. Here and there a tiny rushlight shone out, high up, and marked a hill-farm. Possibly the searchers had found the child. In that case, Mr. Sutton's heart, which should have leapt at the thought, mildly rejoiced; and that, rather on account of the favourable turn the discovery might give to Henrietta's affairs than for his patron's sake. Not that he was not sorry for the child,

and sorry for the father ; he tried, indeed, to feel more sorry. But he was not a man of warm feelings, and his sensibilities were selfish. He could not be expected to blossom out in a moment in more directions than one. It was something if he had learned in the few days he had spent by the lake to think of any other than himself.

Had he been more anxious, had it been not he, but the father, who paced there in suspense, dwelling on what a moment might bring forth, he had been keener to notice things. He had traced, down the shoulder of Wansfell the slow march of a dancing light that marked the descent of one of the parties. He had heard afar off the voices of the men, who announced from Calgarth that Mrs. Watson's servants had searched the woods as far as Elleray, but without success—these, indeed, were the first to come in. Hard on them arrived a band, under Mr. Curwen's bailiff, which had made the tour of the islands—Belle Isle, Lady Holm, Thompson's Holm, and the rest—with the same result ; and almost at the same moment rode in, with jaded horses, the troop of yeomen who had undertaken to traverse the broken country at the head of the lake, between the Brathay and the Rotha. Two parties, the Troutbeck contingent with which was Captain Clyne, and the riders who had chosen Stock Ghyll valley and the Kirkstone, were still out at seven ; and as the others had met with no success, their return was eagerly awaited. For, late as it was, the road between the inn and the lake was astir with life. Ostler's lanthorns twinkled hither and thither, and the place was like a fair. A crowd of men, muffled in homespun plaids, blocked the doorway, and gabbling over their ale, stared now in one direction, now in the other ; while the more highly favoured flocked into the snuggery and coffee-room and there discussed the chances in stentorian tones. The chaplain, with his feelings engaged elsewhere, wondered at the fury of some, and the heat of all ; and was shocked by their oaths and threats of vengeance.

Clyne and his party came in about half-past seven ; and as it chanced that the Stock Ghyll troop arrived at the same minute, the whole house turned out to meet the two, and

learn their news. Alas, the downcast faces of the riders told it sufficiently; and every head was uncovered as Clyne, with stern and moody eyes, rode to the door and dismounted. He turned to the throng of faces, and the lanthorn-light falling on his features showed them pale and disturbed.

"My friends," he said, "I thank you. I shall not forget this day. I shall never forget this day. I——" and then, though he was a practised speaker, he could not say more or go on. He made a gesture, at once pathetic and dignified, with his single arm, and turning from them went slowly up the stairs with his chin on his breast.

The farmers were Tories to a man. Even Brougham's silver tongue had failed (in the election of the year before) to turn them against the Lowthers. They were of the class from whom the yeomanry were drawn, and they had scant sympathy with the radical weavers of Rochdale and Bury, Bolton and Manchester. Had they caught the villains at this moment, they had made short work of them. They watched the slight figure with its empty sleeve as it passed into the house, and their looks of compassion were exceeded only by their curses loud and deep. And pitiful indeed was the tale which those, who were forced to go, carried home to their wives and daughters on the fells.

The chaplain, hovering on the edge of the chattering groups, could not come at once at his patron, who had no sooner reached the head of the stairs than he was beset by Nadin and others with reports and arrangements. But as soon as Clyne had gone wearily to his room to take some food before starting afresh—for it was determined to continue the search as soon as the moon rose—the chaplain went to him with his book under his arm.

He found Clyne seated before the fire, with his chin on his hand and his attitude one of the deepest despondency. He had borne up with difficulty under the public gaze; he gave way, martinet as he was, the moment he was alone. The reflection that the child might have been within reach of his voice, yet beyond his help, that it might be crying to him even now, and crying in vain, that each hour which exposed it

to hardship endangered its life—such thoughts harrowed the father's feelings almost beyond endurance. Sutton suspected from his attitude that he was praying; and for a moment the chaplain, touched and affected, was in two minds about disturbing him. But he, too, had his harassing thoughts. His heart, too, burned with pity. And to turn back now was to abandon the hope—grown forlorn already—of freeing Henrietta that evening. He went forward therefore with boldness. He laid his book on the table, and finding himself unheeded, cleared his throat.

"I have something here," he said—and his voice, despite himself, was needlessly stiff and distant—"which I think it my duty, Captain Clyne, to show you without delay."

Clyne turned slowly and rose as he turned.

"To show me?" he muttered.

"Yes."

"What is it? You have not"—raising his eyes with a sudden intake of breath—"discovered anything? A clue?"

"I have discovered something," the chaplain answered slowly. "It is a clue of a kind."

A rush of blood darkened Clyne's face. He held out a shaking hand.

"To where the lad is?" he ejaculated, taking a step forward. "To where they have taken him? If it be so, God bless you, Sutton! God bless you! God bless you! I'll never——"

The clergyman cut him short. He was shocked by the other's intense excitement and frightened by the swelling of his features. He stayed him by a gesture.

"Nay, nay," he cried. "I did not mean, sir, to awaken false hopes. Pray pardon me. Pray pardon me. It is a clue, but to Miss Damer's conduct this morning! To her conduct throughout. To her reasons for silence. Which were not, I am now able to show you, connected with any feeling of hostility to you, Captain Clyne, but rather imposed upon her——"

But Clyne's face had settled into a mask of stone. Only

he knew what the disappointment was! And at that word, "I care not what they were!" he said in a voice incredibly harsh, "or how imposed! If that be all—if that is all you are here to tell me——"

"But if it be all, it is all to her!" Sutton retorted, stung in his turn. "And most urgent, sir."

"As to her?"

"As to her. It places her conduct in an entirely different light, Captain Clyne, and one which it is your duty to recognise."

"Have I not said," Clyne answered with bitter vehemence, "that I wish to hear naught of her conduct? Do you know, sir, in what light I regard her?"

"I hope in none that—that——"

"As a murderess," Clyne answered in the same tone of restrained fury. "She has conspired against a child! A boy who never harmed her, and now never could have harmed her! She is not worthy of the name of woman! I thank God that He has helped me to keep her out of my mind as I rode to-day. And you—you must needs bring her up again! Know that I loathe and detest her, sir, and pray that I may never see her, never hear her name again!"

Mr. Sutton raised his hands in horror.

"You are unjust!" he cried. "Indeed, indeed, you are unjust!"

"What is that to you? And who are you to talk to me? Is it your child who is missing? Your child who is being dragged at these men's heels? You? You? What have you to do with this?"

The tone was crushing. But the chaplain, too, had his stubborn side, and resentment flamed within him as he thought of the girl and her lot. "Do I understand, then," he said—he was very pale—"that you refuse to hear what I have by chance discovered—in Miss Damer's favour?"

"I do."

"That you will not, Captain Clyne, even look at this letter—this letter which I have found and which exonerates her?"

"Never!" Clyne replied harshly. "Never! And, now you know my mind, go, sir, and do not return to this subject! This is no time for trifling, nor am I in the mood."

But the chaplain held his ground, though he was very nervous. And a resolution, great and heroic, took shape within him, growing in a moment to full size—he knew not how. He raised his meagre figure to its full height, and his pale peaky face assumed a dignity which the pulpit had never known. "I, too, am in no mood for trifling, Captain Clyne," he said. "But I do not hold this matter trifling. On the contrary, I wish you to understand that I think it so important that I consider it my duty to press it upon you by every means in my power!"

Clyne looked at him wrathfully, astonished at his presumption. "The girl has turned your head," he said.

The chaplain waived the words aside. "And therefore," he continued, "if you decline, Captain Clyne, to read this letter, or to consider the evidence it contains——"

"That I do absolutely! Absolutely!"

"I beg to resign my office," Mr. Sutton responded, trembling violently. "I will no longer—I will no longer serve one, however much I respect him, or whatever my obligations to him, who refuses to do justice to his own kith and kin, who refuses to stand between a helpless girl and wrong! Vile wrong!" And he made a gesture with his hands as if he laid something on the table.

If his object was to gain possession of Captain Clyne's attention he succeeded. Clyne looked at him with as much surprise as anger.

"She has certainly turned your head," he said in a lower tone, "if you are not playing a sorry jest, that is. What is it to you, man, if I follow my own judgment? What is Miss Damer to you?"

"You offered her to me," with a trembling approach to sarcasm, "for my wife. She is so much to me."

"But I understood that she would not take you," Clyne retorted; and now he spoke wearily. The surprise of the other's defiance was beginning to wear off. "But, there,

perhaps I was mistaken, and then your anxiety for her interests is explained."

"Explain it as you please," Mr. Sutton answered with fire, "if you will read this letter and weigh it."

"I will not," Clyne returned, his anger rising anew. "Once for all, I will not!"

"Then I resign the chaplaincy I hold, sir."

"Resign and be d——d!" the naval captain answered. The day had cruelly tried his temper.

"Your words to me," Mr. Sutton retorted furiously, "and your conduct to her are of a piece!" And white with passion, his limbs trembling with excitement, he strode to the door. He halted on the threshold, bowed low, and went out.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN KENDAL GAOL

BISHOP, in his corner of the chaise, made his burly person as small as he could, and tried his best to hide his brown tops and square-toed boots. In her corner Henrietta sat upright, staring rigidly before her. For just one moment, as she passed from the house to the carriage, under a score of staring eyes, a scarlet flush had risen to her very hair, and she had shrunk back. But the colour had faded as quickly as it had risen; she had restrained herself, and taken her seat. And now the screes of Bow Fell, flecked with snow, were not more cold and hard than her face as she gazed at the postilion's moving back and saw it not. She knew that she was down now without hope of rising; that, the prison doors once closed on her, their shadow would rest on her always. And her heart was numbed by despair. The burning sense of injustice, of unfairness, which sears and hardens the human heart more quickly and more completely than any other emotion, would awaken presently. But for the time she sat stunned and hopeless; dazed and confounded by the astonishing thing which had happened to her. To be sent to prison! To be sent to herd—she remembered his very words—with such vile creatures as prisons hold! To be at the beck and call of such a man as this who sat beside her. To have to obey; and to belong no longer to herself, but to others! As she thought of all this, and of the ordeal before her, fraught with humiliations yet unknown, a hunted look grew in her eyes, and for a few minutes she glanced wildly first out of this window, then out of that. To prison! She was going to prison!

Fortunately her native courage came to her aid in her extremity. And Bishop, who was not blind to her emotion, spoke.

"Don't you be over-frightened, miss," he said soothingly. "There's naught to be scared about. I'll speak to them, and they'll treat you well. Not that a gaol is a comfortable place," he continued, remembering his duty to his employer; "and if you could see your way to speaking—even now, miss—I'd take it on me to turn the horses."

"I have nothing to say," she answered, with a shudder and an effort—for her throat was dry. But the mere act of speaking broke the spell and relieved her of some of her fears.

"It's the little boy I'm thinking of," Bishop continued in a tone of apology. "Captain Clyne thinks the world of him. The world of him! But, lord, miss!" abruptly changing his tone, as his eyes alighted on her wrist, "what have you done to your arm?"

She hid her wrist quickly, and with her face averted said that it was nothing, nothing.

Bishop shook his head sagely.

"I doubt you bruised it getting out of the window," he said. "Well, well, miss; live and learn. Another time you'll be wiser, I hope; and not do such things."

She did not answer, and the chaise, passing by Plumgarth, began to descend into the wide stony valley. Below them the white-washed walls and slated roofs and mills of Kendal could be seen clustering about the Castle Bow and the old grey ruin that rises above the Ken river. On either hand bleak hills, seamed with grey walls, made up a landscape that rose without beauty to a lowering sky. There were few trees, no hedges; and somewhere the cracked bell of a drugget factory or a dye-works was clanging out a monotonous summons. To Henrietta's eye—fresh from the lake-side verdure—and still more to her heart, the northern landscape struck cold and cheerless. It had given her but a sorry welcome had she been on her way to seek the hospitality of the inn. How much poorer was its welcome when she had no prospect before her but the scant comfort and unknown hardships of a gaol!

The chaise did not enter the town, but a furlong short of it turned aside and made for a group of windowless buildings, which crowned a small eminence a bow-shot from the houses. As the horses drew the chaise up the ascent to a heavy stone doorway, Henrietta had time to see that the entrance was mean, if strong, and the place as unpretending as it was dull. Nevertheless, her heart beat almost to suffocation, as she stepped out at a word from Bishop, who had alighted and knocked at the iron-studded door. With small delay a grating was opened, a pale face, marked by high, hollow temples, looked out; and some three or four sentences were exchanged. Then the door was unlocked and thrown open. Bishop signed to her to enter first and she did so—after an imperceptible pause. She found herself in a small well-like yard, with the door and window of the prison-lodge on her left and dead walls on the other sides.

Two children were playing on the steps of the lodge, and some linen, dubiously drying in the cold winter air, hung on a line stretched from the window to a holdfast in the opposite wall. Unfortunately, the yard had been recently washed, and still ran with water; so that these homely uses, and even the bench and pump which stood in a corner, failed to impart much cheerfulness to its aspect. Had Henrietta's heart been capable of sinking lower it had certainly done so.

The children stared open-mouthed at her: but not with half as much astonishment as the man in shirt sleeves who had admitted her. "Eh, sir, but you've brought the cage a fine bird," he said at last. "Your servant, miss. Well, well, well!" with surprise. And he scratched his head and grinned openly. "Debtors' side, I suppose?"

"Remand," Bishop answered with a wink and a meaning shake of the head. "Here's the warrant. All's right." And then to Henrietta—"If you'll sit down on that bench, miss, I'll fix things up for you."

The girl, her face a little paler than usual, sat down as she was bidden, and looked about her. This was not her notion of a prison; for here were neither gyves nor dungeons, but just a slatternly, damp yard—as like as could be to some

small backyard in the out-offices of her brother's house. Nevertheless, the gyves might be waiting for her out of sight; and with or without them, the place was horribly depressing that winter afternoon. The sky was grey above, the walls were grey, the pavement grey. She was almost glad when Bishop and the man in shirt-sleeves emerged from the lodge followed by a tall, hard-featured woman in a dirty mob-cap. The woman's arms were bare to the elbow, and she carried a jingling bunch of keys. She eyed Henrietta with dull dislike.

"That is settled, then," Bishop said, a little over-doing the cheerfulness at which he aimed. "Mother Weighton will see to you, and 'twill be all right. There are four on the debtors' side, and you'll be best in the women-felons', she thinks, since it's empty, and you'll have it all to yourself."

Henrietta heaved a deep sigh of relief. "I shall be alone, then?" she said. "Oh, thank you."

"Ay, you'll be alone," the woman answered, staring at her. "Very much alone! But I'm not sure you'll thank me, by-and-by. You madams are pretty loud for company, I've always found, when you've had your own a bit." Then, "You don't mind being locked up in a yard by yourself?" she continued, with a close look at the girl's face and long grey riding-dress.

"Oh no, I shall be grateful to you," Henrietta said eagerly, "if you will let me be alone."

"Ah, well, we'll see how you like it," the woman retorted. "Here, Ben," to her husband, "I suppose she is too much of a fine lady to carry her band-box—yet awhile. Do you bring it."

"I am sure," Bishop said, "the young lady will be grateful for any kindness, Mrs. Weighton. I will wait till you've lodged her comfortably. God bless my soul," he continued, screwing up his features, as he affected to look about him, "I don't know that one's not as well in as out!"

"Well, there's no writs nor burglars!" the jailor answered with a grin. "And the young folks, male nor female, don't get into trouble through staying out o' nights. Now, then, missis," to his wife, "no need to be all day over it."

The woman unlocked a low door in the wall opposite the

dge, but at the inner end of the yard; and she signed to enrietta to enter before her. The girl did so, and found rself in a flagged yard about thirty feet square. On her ght were four mean-looking doors having above each a grated erture. Henrietta eyed these and her heart sank. They ere only too like the dungeons she had foreseen! But the llor's wife turned to the opposite side of the yard where ere two doors with small glazed windows over them. The o sides that remained consisted of high walls, surmounted iron spikes.

"We'll put you in a day-room as they're all empty," the oman grumbled. She meant not ill, but she had the unrtunate knack of making her concessions with a bad grace. She unlocked one of the doors, and disclosed a small whiteashed room, cold, but passably clean. A rough bench and heavy table occupied the middle of the floor, and in a corner ood a clumsy spinning-wheel. The floor was of stone, but ere was a makeshift fireplace, dulled by rust and dirt.

"Get in a bedstead, Ben," she continued. "I suppose," oking abruptly at Henrietta, "you are not used to chaff, oung woman?"

The girl stared.

"I don't understand, I am afraid," she faltered.

"You are used to feathers, I dare say?" with a sneer.

"Oh, for a bed?"

"What else?" impatiently. "Good lord, haven't you our senses? You can have your choice. It's eight-pence r chaff, and a shilling for feathers."

"I don't mind paying while I've money," Henrietta said umbly. "If you'll please to charge me what is right."

"Well, it's cheap enough, the lord knows; for since the anges there's no garnish this side. And for the third of the rnings that's left to us in place of it, I'd not give fippence week for all!"

The man had dragged in, while she talked, a kind of wooden cough for the bed, and set it in a corner. He had then eparted for firing, and returned with a shovelful of burning oals, for the room was as cold as the grave.

"There's a pump in the yard," the woman said, "and a can and basin, but you must serve yourself. And there's a pitcher for drinking. And you can have from the cook-shop what you like to order in. You'll have to keep your place clean; but as long as you behave yourself, we'll treat you according. Only," she continued, "let us have no scratching and screaming! Tempers don't pay here, I'll warn you. And for swoonings we just turn the tap on! So do you take notice." And with a satisfied look round, "For the rest, there's many a young woman that's not gone wrong that's not so comfortable as you, my girl. And I'd have you to know it."

Henrietta coloured painfully.

"I shall do very well," she said meekly. "But I've not done anything wrong."

"Ay, ay," the woman answered unconcernedly, "they all say that! That's of course. But I can't stay talking here. What'd you like for your supper? A pint of stout, and a plate of a-la-mode? Or a chop?"

Henrietta reduced the order to tea and a white loaf and butter—if it could be got—and asked meekly if she might have something to read.

The *Kendal Chronicle* was promised. "You'll have your meal at five," Mother Weighton continued. "And your light must be out at eight, and you'll have to 'tend service in chapel on Sunday. By rule your door should be locked at five; but as you're alone, and the lock's on the yard, I'll say naught about that. You can have the run of the yard as a favour and till another comes in."

Then with a final look round she went out, her pattens clinked across the court, and Henrietta heard the key turned in the outer door.

She stood a moment pressing her hands to her eyes, and trying to control herself. At length she uncovered her eyes, and she looked again round the whitewashed cell. Yes, it was real. The flagged floor, the bench, the table, the odd-looking bed in its wooden trough—all were real, hard, bare. And the solitude and the dreary silence, and the light that

as beginning to fade! The place was far from her crude otion of a prison; but in its cold, naked severity it was as ar outside her previous experience. She was in prison, nd this was her cell, that was her prison-yard. And she as alone, quite, quite alone.

A sob rose in her throat, and then she laughed hysterically, s she remembered their way with those who fainted. And tting limply down, she warmed herself at the fire, and dried wo or three tears. She looked about her again, eyed again ne whitewashed walls, and listened. The silence was com-lete; it almost frightened her. And her door had no astening on the inside. That fact moved her in the end to se, and go out and explore the yard, that she might make ure before the light failed that no one was locked in with er, that no one lurked behind the closed cell doors.

The task was not long. She tried the five doors, and ound them all locked; she knocked softly on them, and ot no answer. The pump, the iron basin, a well scrubbed ench, a couple of besoms, and a bucket, she had soon eviewed all that the yard held. There was a trap or Judas-ole in the outer door, and another, which troubled her, in ne door of her cell. But on the whole the survey left her eassured and more at ease; the place, though cold, bare, nd silent, was her own. And when her tea and a dip-candle ppeared at five she was able to show the jailor's wife a neerful face.

The woman had heard more of her story by this time, and yed her with greater interest, and less rudely.

"You'll not be afraid to be alone?" she said. "You've o need to be. You're safe enough, here."

"I'm not afraid," Henrietta answered meekly. "But —couldn't I have a fastening on my door, please?"

"On the inside? Lord, no! But I can lock you in if ou like," with a grin.

"Oh no! I did not mean that!"

"Well, then, you must just push the table against the door. t's against rules," with a wink, "but I shan't be here to see." nd pulling her woollen shawl more closely about her, she

continued to stare at the girl. Presently, "Lord's sakes!" she said, "it's a queer world! I suppose you never was in a jail before? Never saw the inside of one, perhaps?"

"No."

"It's something political, I'm told," snuffing the candle with her fingers, and reasuming her inquisitive stare.

Henrietta nodded

"With a man in it, of course! Drat the men! They do a plaguey deal of mischief! Many's the decent lass, before you, that's been transported because of them!"

Henrietta's smile faded suddenly.

"I hope it's not as bad as that," she said.

"Well, I don't know," scrutinising the girl's face. "It's for you to say. The officer that brought you—quite the gentleman too—told us it was something to do with a murder. But you know best."

"I hope not!"

"Well, I hope not too! For if it be, it'll be mighty unpleasant for you. It's not three years since a lad I knew myself was sent across seas for just being out at night with a rabbit-net. So it's easy done and soon over! And too late crying when the milk's spilt." And once more snuffing the candle and telling Henrietta to leave her door open until she had crossed the yard, she took herself off. Once more, but now with a sick qualm, the girl heard the key turned on her.

"Transportation!" She did not know precisely what it meant; but she knew that it meant something very dreadful. "Transportation! Oh, it is impossible!" she murmured, "impossible! I have done nothing!"

Yet the word frightened her, the shadow of the thing haunted her. These locks and bars, this solitude, this cold routine, was it possible that once in their clutch the victim slid on, helpless and numbed—to something worse? To-day, deaf to her protests, they had sent her here—sent her by a force which seemed outside themselves. And no one had intervened in her favour. No one had stepped forward to save her or speak for her. Would the same thing befall her

again ? Would they try her in the same impersonal fashion—as if she were a thing, a chattel—and find her guilty, condemn her, and hand her over to brutal officials, and—she rose from her bench, shuddering, unable to bear the prospect. She had begun the descent, must she sink to the bottom ? Was it inevitable ? Could she no longer help herself ? Sick, shivering with sudden fear she walked the floor.

"Oh, it is impossible!" she cried, battling against her terror, and trying to reassure herself. "It is impossible!" And for the time she succeeded by a great effort in throwing off the nightmare.

No one came near her that evening. And quite early the dip burned low, and worn out and tired she went to bed, only partially undressing herself. The bedding, though rough and horribly coarse, was clean, and, little as she expected it, she fell asleep quickly in the strange stillness of the prison.

She slept until an hour or two before dawn. Then she awoke and sat up with a child's cry in her ears. The impression was so real, so vivid that the bare walls of the cell seemed to ring with the plaintive voice. Quaking and perspiring she listened. She was sure that it was no dream ; the voice had been too real, too clear ; and she wondered in a panic what it could be. It was only slowly that she remembered where she was and recognised that no child's cry could reach her there. Nor was it until after a long interval that she lay down again.

When she did, she was not alone. The image of a little child, lonely, friendless, and terrified, stayed with her, crouched by her pillow, sat weeping in the dark corners of the cell, haunted her. She tried to shake off the delusion, but the attempt was vain. Conscience, that in the dark hours before the dawn subjects all to his sceptre, began to torment her. Had she acted rightly ? Ought she to have put the child first and her romantic notions second ? And if any ill happened to it—and it was a delicate, puny thing—would it lie at her door ?

Remorse began to rack her. She wondered that she had not thought more of the child, been wrung with more pity

for it, sympathised more deeply with its fears and its misery. What, beside its plight, was hers? What, beside its terrors, were her fears? She lay for some time thus tormenting herself, and was glad when the light stole in and she could rise, cold as it was, and set her bed and her cell in order. By the time this was done, and she had paced for half an hour up and down to warm herself, a girl of eight, the jailer's child, came with a shovel of embers and helped her to light the fire—staring much at her the while.

"Mother said I could help you make your bed," she began.

Henrietta with a smile said that she had made it already.

"Mother thought you'd be too fine to make it," still staring.

"Well, you see I am not."

"I am glad of that," the child answered candidly. "For mother said you'd have to come to it and to worse, if you were transported, miss."

Henrietta winced afresh, and looked at the imp less kindly.

"But I'm not going to be transported," she said positively. "You're talking nonsense."

"There's never been any one transported from here, still staring."

"No?" with relief. "Then why should I be?"

"But there was a man hanged three years ago. It was for stealing a lamb. They didn't let me see it."

"And very right, too."

"But mother's promised"—with triumph—"that if you're transported I shall see it!" After which there was silence while the child stared. At last, "Are you ready for your breakfast now?"

"Yes," said poor Henrietta. "But I am not very hungry—you can tell your mother."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RÔLE CONTINUED

MR. SUTTON slept as ill on the night of his resignation as he had ever slept in his life. And many times as he tossed and turned on his bed he repented at leisure the step which he had taken in haste. Acting upon no previous determination, he had sacrificed in the heat of temper his whole professional future. He had staked his all; and he had done no good even to the cause he had at heart. The act would not bear thinking upon; certainly it would not bear the cold light of early reflection. And many, many times as he sighed upon his uneasy pillow did he wish, as so many have wished before and since, that he could put back the clock. Had he left the room five minutes earlier, had he held his tongue, however ungraciously, had he thought before he spoke, he had done as much for Henrietta and he had done no harm to himself. And he had been as free as he was now, to seek his end by other means.

For he had naught to do now but seek that end. He had not Mr. Pitt's nose in vain: he was nothing if he was not stubborn. And while Henrietta might easily have had a more discreet, she could hardly have had a more persevering friend. Amid the wreck of his own fortunes, with his professional future laid in ruins about him, he clung steadfastly to the notion of righting her, and found in that and in the letter in his book, his only stay. At as early an hour as he considered decent, he would apply to Mr. Hornyold, lay the evidence before the justice, and press for the girl's release.

Unfortunately, he lay so long revolving the matter that at daybreak he fell asleep. The house was busy and no

one gave a thought to him, and ten had struck before he came down and shamefacedly asked for his breakfast. Mrs. Gilson put it before him, but with a word of girding at his laziness; which the good woman could not stomach, when half the countryside were on foot searching for the boy, and when the unhappy father, after a night in the saddle, had left in a postchaise to follow up a clue at Keswick. Blameworthy or not, Mr. Sutton found the delay fatal. When he called on Mr. Hornyold, the justice was not at home. He had left the house and would not return until the following day.

Sutton might have anticipated this check, but he had not; and he walked back to the inn, plunged to the very lips in despondency. The activity of the people about him, their eagerness in the search, their enthusiasm, all reflected on him and sank him in his own esteem. Yet if he would, he could not share in these things or in these feelings. He stood outside them; his sympathies were fixed, obstinately fixed, elsewhere. And, alas, in the only direction in which he desired to proceed, and in which he discerned a possible issue, he was brought to a full stop.

He was in the mood to feel small troubles sorely, and as he neared the inn he saw that Mrs. Gilson was standing at the door. It vexed him, for he felt that he cut a poor figure in the landlady's eyes. He knew that he seemed to her a sorry thing, slinking idly about the house, while others wrought and did. He feared her sharp tongue and vulgar tropes, and he made up his mind to pass by the house as if he did not see her. He was in the act of doing this, awkwardly and consciously, with his eyes averted—when she called to him.

"If you're looking for Squire Clyne," she said, in very much the tone he expected, "he's gone these three hours past and some to that!"

"I was not," he said.

"Oh!" she answered with sarcasm, "I suppose you are looking for the boy. You will not find him, I'm afraid, on the King's highroad!"

"I was not looking for him," he answered churlishly.

"More shame to you!" Mrs. Gilson cried, with a spark in her eye. "More shame to you! For you should be!"

He flamed up at that, after the passionate manner of such men when roused. He stopped and faced her, trembling a little.

"And to whom is it a shame," he cried, "that wicked, foul injustice is done? To whom is it a shame that the innocent are sent to herd with the guilty? To whom is it a shame—woman!—that when there is good, clear evidence put before their eyes, it is not read? Nor used? The boy?" vehemently, "the boy? Is he the only one to be considered, and sought and saved? Is his case worse than hers? I too say shame!"

Mrs. Gilson stared. "Lord save the man!" she cried, as much astonished as if a sheep had turned on her, "with his shames and his whoms! He's as full of words as a Wensleydale of mites! I don't know what you are in the pulpit, your reverence, but on foot and in the road, Mr. Brougham was naught to you!"

"He'd not the reason," the chaplain answered bitterly. And brought down by her remark—for his passion was of the shortest—he turned, and was moving away, morose and despondent, when the landlady called after him a second time, but in a more friendly tone. Perhaps curiosity, perhaps some new perception of the man moved her.

"See here, your reverence," she said. "If you've a mind to show me this fine evidence of yours, I'm not for saying I'll not read it. Lord knows it's ill work going about like a hen with an egg she can't lay. So if you've a mind to get it off your mind, I'll send for my glasses, and be done with it."

"Will you?" he replied, his face flushing with the hope of making a convert. "Will you? Then there, ma'am, there it is! It's the letter that villain sent to her to draw her to meet him that night. If you can't see from that what terms they were on, and that she had no choice but to meet him, I—but read it! Read it!"

She called for her glasses, and having placed them on her nose, set the nose at such an angle that she could look down

it at the page. This was Mrs. Gilson's habit when about to read. But when all was arranged her face fell. "Oh dear!" she said, it's all bits and scraps, like a broken curd! Lord save the man, I can't read this. I canna make top nor tail of it! Here, let me take it inside. Truth is, I'm no scholar in the open air."

The chaplain, trembling with eagerness, set straight three or four bits of paper which he had deranged in opening the book. Then, not trusting it out of his own hands, he bore the book reverently into the landlady's snuggery, and set it on the table. Mrs. Gilson rearranged her nose and glasses, and after gazing helplessly for a few moments at the broken screed, caught some thread of sense, clung to it desperately, and presently began to murmur disjointed sentences in the tone of one who thought aloud.

"Um—um—um—um!"

Had the chaplain been told a fortnight before that he would wait with bated breath for an old woman's opinion of a document, he would have laughed at the notion. But so it was; and when a ray of comprehension broke the frowning perplexity of Mrs. Gilson's face, and she muttered, "Lord ha' mercy! The villain!" still more when an April cloud of mingled anger and pity softened her massive features—the chaplain's relief was itself a picture.

"A plague on the rascal!" the good woman cried. "He's put it so as to melt a stone, let alone a silly child like that! I don't know that if he'd put it so to me, when I was a lass, I'd have told on him. I don't think I would!"

"It's plain that she'd no understanding with him!" Mr. Sutton cried eagerly. "You can see that, ma'am!"

"Well, I think I can. The villain!"

"It's quite clear that she had broken with him!"

"It does look so, poor lamb!"

"Poor lamb indeed!" Mr. Sutton replied with feeling. "Poor lamb indeed!"

"Yet you'll remember," Mrs. Gilson answered—she was nothing if not level-headed—"he'd the lad to think of! He'd his boy to think of! I am sure my heart bled for him

when he went out this morning. I doubt he'd not slept a wink, and——"

"Do you think she slept either?" the chaplain asked, something bitterly; and his eyes glowed in his pale face. "Do you consider how young she is and gently bred, ma'am? And where they've sent her, and to what?"

"Umph!" the landlady replied, and she rubbed her wonderous cheek with the bowl of a punch-ladle, and looked, frowning, at the letter. The operation, it was plain, clarified her thoughts; and Mr. Sutton's instinct told him to be mute. For a long minute the distant clatter of Modest Ann's tongue, and the clink of pattens in the yard, were the only sounds that broke the lemon-laden silence of the room. Perhaps it was the glint of the fire on the rows of polished glass, perhaps the light of her own well-cushioned chair, perhaps only a memory of Henrietta's fair young face and piled-up hair that wrought upon the landlady. But whatever the cause she groaned. And then, "He ought to see this!" she said. "He surely ought! And dang me, he shall, if he leaves the house to-night! After all, two wrongs don't make a right. He's to Keswick this morning, but an hour after noon he'll be back to learn if there's news. It's only here he can get news, and if he has not found the lad he'll be back! And I'll put it on his plate——"

"God bless you!" cried Mr. Sutton.

"Ay, but I'm not saying he'll do anything," the landlady answered tartly. "If all's true the young madam has not behaved so well that she'll be the worse for smarting a bit!"

"She'll be much obliged to you," said the chaplain humbly.

"No, she'll not!" Mrs. Gilson retorted. "Nor to you, don't you think it! She's a Tartar or I'm mistaken. You'll be obliged, you mean!" And she looked at the parson over her glasses as if she were appraising him in a new character.

"I've been to Mr. Hornyold," he said, "but he was out and will not be back until to-morrow."

"Ay, he's more in his boots than on his knees most days," the landlady answered. "But what I've said, I'll do, that's flat. And here's the coach, so it's twelve noon."

She tugged at the cord of the yard bell, and its loud jangle

in a twinkling roused the house to activity and the stables to frenzy. The fresh team were led jingling and prancing out of the yard, the ostlers running beside them. Modest Ann and her underling hastened to show themselves on the steps of the inn, and Mrs. Gilson herself passed into the passage ready to welcome any visitors of consequence.

Mr. Bishop and two Lancashire officers who had been pushing the quest in the Furness district descended from the outside of the coach. But they brought no news; and Sutton, as soon as he learned this, did not linger with them. The landlady's offer could not have any immediate result, since Clyne was not expected to return before two; and the chaplain, to kill time, went out at the back, and climbed the hill. He walked until he was tired, and then he turned, and at two made his way back to the inn, only to learn that Clyne had not yet arrived. None the less, the short day already showed signs of drawing in. There was snow in the sky. It hung heavy above Langdale Pikes and over the long ragged screes of Bow Fell. White cushions of cloud were piled one on the other to the northward, and earth and sky were alike depressing. Weary and despondent, Sutton wandered into the house, and sitting down before the first fire he found, he fell fast asleep.

He awoke with a confused murmur of voices in his ears. The room was dark save for the firelight; and for a few seconds he fancied that he was still alone. The men whose talk he heard were in another part of the house, and soothed by their babble and barely conscious where he was, he was sinking away again when a harsh voice and a touch on his sleeve awoke him. He sprang up, startled and surprised, and saw that Captain Clyne, his face fitfully revealed by the flame, was standing on the other side of the hearth. Clyne was in his riding boots and was splashed to the waist.

His face was paler than usual, and his pose told of fatigue.

"Awake, man, awake!" he repeated. "Didn't you hear me?"

"No, I—I was dozing," the chaplain faltered, as he put back his chair.

"Just so," Clyne answered drily. "I wish I could sleep. Well, listen now. I have been back an hour, and I have read this." He laid his hand on an object on the table, and Sutton with joy saw that the object was the book which he had left with Mrs. Gilson. "I am sorry," Clyne continued in a constrained tone, "that I did not read it last evening. It was wrong. But—God help me, I think I am almost mad! Anyway I have read it now, and I credit it, and I think that—one has been harshly treated. And I am here to tell you," a little more distinctly, "that you can arrange the matter to your satisfaction, sir."

Sutton stared. "Do you mean," he said, "that I may arrange for her release?"

"I have settled that," Clyne answered. "Mr. Hornyold is not at home, but I have seen Mr. Le Fleming, and have given bail for her appearance when required; and here is Mr. Fleming's order for her release. I have ordered a post-chaise to be ready and it will be at the door in ten minutes."

"But then—all is done?" the chaplain said.

"Except fetching her back," Clyne answered. "She must come here. There is nowhere else for her to go. But I leave that to you, since her release is due to you. I have done her an injustice, and done you one too. But God knows," he continued bitterly, "not without provocation. Nor willingly, nor knowingly."

"I am sure of that," the chaplain answered meekly.

"Yes. Of course," Clyne continued, awkwardly, "I shall not consider what you said to me as said at all. On the contrary, I am obliged to you for doing your duty, Mr. Sutton, whatever the motive."

"The motive——"

"I do not say," stiffly, "that the motive was an improper one. Not at all. I cannot blame you for following up my own plan."

"I followed my feelings," Mr. Sutton replied, with a fresh stirring of resentment.

"Exactly. And therefore it seems to me that as she owes her release to your exertions, it is right that you should be

the one to communicate the fact to her, and the one to bring her away."

The chaplain saw that his patron, convinced that there was more between them than he had supposed, was falling back on the old plan; that he was willing to give him the opportunity of pushing his suit. And the blood rushed to his face. If she could be brought—if she could be brought to look favourably on him! Ah, then indeed he was a happy man, and the dark night of despondency would be followed by a morn of joy. But with the quickness of light his thoughts passed over the various occasions—they were very few—on which he had addressed her. And—an odd thing happened. It happened, perhaps, because with the chaplain the matter was no longer a question of ambition, but of love. "You have no news?" he said.

"None. And Nadin," with bitterness, "seems to be at the end of his resources."

"Then, Captain Clyne," Sutton replied impulsively, "there is but one way! There is but one thing to be done. It is not I, but you, who must bring Miss Damer back. She may still speak, but not for me!"

"And certainly not for me!" Clyne answered, his face flushing at the recollection of his violence.

"For you rather than for any one!"

"No, no!"

"Yes," the chaplain rejoined firmly. "I do not know how I know it," he continued with dignity, "but I know it. For one thing, I am not blind. Miss Damer has never given me a word or a look of encouragement. If she thanks me," he spoke with something like a tear in his eye, "it will be much—the kind of thanks you, Captain Clyne, give to the servant that lacquers your boots, or the dog that fetches your stick. But you—with you it will be different."

"She has no reason to thank me," Clyne declared.

"Yet she will."

"No."

"She will!" Sutton answered fervently—he was determined to carry out his impulsive act of unselfishness. "And,

hank you or not thank you, she may speak. She will speak, hen released, if ever! She is one who will do nothing under ompulsion, nothing under durance. But she will do much—or love."

Clyne looked with astonishment at the chaplain. He, like Irs. Gilson, was appraising him afresh, was finding something ew in him, something unexpected. "How do you know?" e asked, his cheeks reddening.

There were for certain tears in Mr. Sutton's eyes now.

"I don't know how I know," he said, "but I do. I know! o and fetch her; and I think, I think she will speak."

Clyne thought otherwise, and had good reason to think therwise; a reason which he was ashamed to tell his chapain. But in the face of his own view he was impressed by utton's belief. The suggestion was at least a straw to which e could cling. Failing other means—and the ardour of his ssistants in the search was beginning to flag—why should e not try this? Why should he not, threats failing, throw imself at the girl's feet, abase himself, humble himself, try t least if he could not win by prayer and humility what she ad refused to force.

It was a plan little to the man's taste; grievous to his ride. But for his son's sake, for the innocent boy's sake, e was willing to do even this. Moreover, with all his coldess, he had sufficient nobility to feel that he owed the girl he fullest amends in his power. He had laid hands on her. He had treated her—no matter what the provocation—ruelly, improperly, in a manner degrading to her and disgraceful to himself. His face flushed as he recalled the scene nd his violence. Now it was hers to triumph, hers to blame: nor his to withhold the opportunity.

"I will go," he said, after a brief perturbed silence. "I am obliged to you for your advice. You think that there is a chance she will speak?"

"I do," Sutton answered manfully. "I do." And he said more to the same purpose.

But later, when the hot fit ebbed, he wondered at himself. What had come over him? Why had he, who had so little

while his patron had so much, given up his ewe lamb, his one chance? Reason answered, because he had no chance and it was wise to make a virtue of necessity. But he knew that, a day or two before, he would have snapped his fingers at reason, he would have clung to his forlorn hope, he would have made for his own advantage by the nearest road. What then had changed him? What had caused him to set the girl's happiness before his own, and whispered to him that there was only one way by which, smirched and discredited as she was, she whom he loved could reach her happiness? He did not answer the question, perhaps he did not know the answer. But wandering in the darkness by the lake-side, with the first snowflakes falling on his shoulders, he cried again and again, "God bless her! God bless her!" with tears running down his pale, insignificant face.

CHAPTER XXV

PRISON EXPERIENCES

WHEN Henrietta rose on the second morning of her imprisonment, and opened her door and looked out, she met with an unpleasant surprise. Snow had fallen in the night, and lay to the depth of an inch in the yard. The sheet of dazzling white cast the dingy spiked wall and the mean cell-doors into grey relief. But it was not this contrast, nor even the memory of childish winters with their pleasures—although that memory took her by the throat and promised to choke her—that filled her with immediate dismay. It was the difficulty of performing the prison duties, of going beyond her door, and refilling her water-pitcher at the pump. To cross the yard in sandaled shoes—such as she and the girls of that day wore—was to spoil her shoes and wet her feet. Yet she could not live without water; the more as she had an instinctive fear of losing, under the pressure of hardship, those refinements in which she had been bred. At length she was about to venture out at no matter what cost, when the door of the yard opened, and the jailor's wife came stumbling through the snow on a pair of pattens. She carried a second pair in her hand, and she seemed to be in anything but a pleasant humour.

"Here's a mess!" she said, throwing down the pattens and looking about her with disgust. "By rights, you should set to work to clear this away, before it's running all of a thaw into your room. But I dare say it will wait till midday—it don't get much sun here—and my good man will come and do it. Anyways, there are some pattens, so that you can get about—there's as good as you have gone on pattens

before now! Ay, and mopped the floor in them! And by-and-by my girl will bring you some fire 'gainst you're ready for your breakfast."

"I'm ready whenever the breakfast is ready," Henrietta answered, as cheerfully as she could. She was shivering with cold.

"Ah, well, ah, well, my lass!" the woman answered snappishly, "there's worse troubles in the world than waiting for your breakfast. For the Lord's sake, don't you get complaining."

"I wasn't complaining, indeed!" Henrietta said.

"Think of the doing we've had this night!"

"I heard," the girl answered. And an involuntary shudder escaped her. "It was dreadful! dreadful!"

"You'd ha' thought so," ungraciously, "if you had had to deal with the lad yourself! Never was such a Jack o' Bedlam! I wonder all our heads aren't broke."

"Is he often like that?" Henrietta asked.

For she had lain awake many hours of the night, trembling and trying to close her ears against the ravings of a madman who was confined in the next yard, and who had suffered an access of mania during the night. The prisons of that day served also for madhouses.

"No, but once in the month or so," the jailor's wife answered. "And often enough, drat him! Doctor says he'll go off in one of these Bedlam fits, and the sooner the better, I say! But I'm wasting my time and catching my death, gossipping with you! Anyway, don't you complain, young woman," severely. "There's worse off than you!" And she clattered abruptly away, and Henrietta was left to patten her road to the pump and back, and afterwards to finish her toilette in what shivering comfort she might.

For a prisoner, she might not have much of which to complain. But though that was not the day of bedroom fires, or rubber water-bottles, and luxury stopped at the warming-pan, or the heated brick, there are degrees of misery, and this degree was new to her.

However, the woman was better than her word, for in a short

time her child appeared, painfully bearing at arm's length a shovelful of live embers. And the fire put a new face on things. Breakfast sent in from outside followed, and was drawn out to the utmost for the sake of the employment which it afforded. For time hung heavy on the girl's hands. She had long exhausted the *Kendal Chronicle*; and a volume of "Sermons for Persons under Sentence of Death"—the property of the gaol—she had steadfastly refused. Other reading there was none, and she was rather gratified than troubled when she espied a thin trickle of water stealing under the door. The snow in the yard was melting; and it was soon made plain to her that if she did not wish to be flooded she must act for herself.

The task was not very congenial to a girl gently bred, and who had all her life associated such work with Doll and a mop. But on her first entrance into the gaol she had resolved to do, as the lesser of two evils, whatever she should be told to do. And the thing might have been worse, for there was no one to see her at work. She kilted up her skirt and donned the pattens, put on her hood, and taking a broom from the corner of the yard, began to sweep vigorously, first removing the snow from the flags before her door, and then, as the space she had cleared grew wider, gathering the snow into a heap at the lower end of the yard.

She was soon warm and in the full enjoyment of action. But in no long time, as was natural, she grew tired, and paused to rest and look about her, supporting herself by the broom-handle. A robin alighted on a spike on the top of the wall, and flirting its tail, eyed her in a friendly way, with its head on one side. Then it flew away—it could fly away! And at the thought,

"What," she wondered, "would come of it all? What would be the end for her? And had they found the boy?"

Already it seemed to her that she had lain a week, a month, in the gaol. The people outside must have forgotten her. Would she be forgotten? Would they leave her there?"

But she would not give way to such thoughts; and she set to work again with new energy. Swish! swish! Her hands were growing sore, but she had nearly finished the task. She

looked complacently at the wide space she had cleared, and stooped to pin up one side of her gown which had slipped down. Then, swish! swish! with renewed vigour, unconscious that the noise of her sweeping drowned the grating of the key in the lock. So that she was not aware, until a voice struck her ear, that she was no longer alone.

Then she wheeled about so sharply that, unused to pattens, she stumbled and all but fell. The accident added to her vexation. Her face turned red as a beet. For inside the door of the yard, contemplating her with a smile at once familiar and unpleasant, stood Mr. Hornyold.

"Dear, dear," he said, as she glowered at him resentfully, ashamed at once of her short skirts and the task that compelled them. "They shouldn't have put you to this! Though I'm sure a prettier sight you'd go far to see! But your hands are infinitely too white and soft, my dear—much too white and pretty to be spoiled by broom-handles! I must speak to Mother Weighton about it."

"Perhaps if you would kindly go out a moment," she said with spirit, "it were better. I could then put myself in order."

"Not for the world!" Mr. Hornyold retorted, with something between a leer and a wink. "You're very well as you are!" with a look at her ankles. "There's nothing to be ashamed of, I'm sure, but the contrary. I'm told that Lady Jersey at Almack's shows more, and with a hundred to see! So you need not mind. And you could not look nicer if you'd done it on purpose."

With a jerk she disengaged her shoes from the pattens, dropped the broom, and made for the door of her room, with such dignity as her kilted skirt left her. But before she reached it:

"Steady, my lady," said Mr. Hornyold in a tone no longer wheedling, but harsh and peremptory, "you're forgetting! You are in gaol, and you'll be pleased to stop when you're told, and do as you're told! Don't you be in such a hurry, my dear. I am here to learn if you have any complaints."

"Only of your presence!" she cried, her face burning. "If you have come here only to insult me, I have heard enough."

And having gained her cell in spite of him, she tried to slam ne door in his face.

But he had had time to approach, and he set the handle of is whip between door and jamb, and stopped her.

" I'm not come for that, I tell you, you pretty spitfire," he aid ; " I've come to hear if you have any complaint of your reatment here."

" I have not ! " she cried.

" Come, come," he rejoined, checking her with a grin, " you nust not answer the Visiting Justice in that tone. Say, ' I have none, sir, I thank you kindly '—that's the proper form, ny dear. You'll know better another time. Or "—smiling nore broadly as he read the angry refusal in her eyes—" we nall have to put you to beat hemp. And that were a pity. Those pretty hands would soon lose their softness, and those ainty wrists that are not much bigger than my thumbs would e sadly spoiled. But we won't do that," indulgently. " We re never hard on pretty girls as long as they behave them-elves."

She looked round wildly, but there was no escape. She could etreat no farther. The man filled the doorway ; the room lay pen to his insolent eyes, and he did not spare to look.

" Neat as a pin ! " he said complacently. " Just as it should e. A place for everything, and everything in its place. I've othing but praise for it. I never thought that it would ever e my lot to commend Miss Damer for the neatness of her hamber ! But—good Lord ! " with surprise, " what's the natter with your wrist, my girl ? "

" Nothing," she said, the angry scarlet of her cheek turning shade deeper.

" Nothing ? Oh, but there is ! " he returned peremptorily.

" Nothing ! " she repeated fiercely. " Nothing ! It's nothing that matters ! "

Oh, how she hated the man ! How she loathed his red, nsolent grin ! Would he never leave her ? Was she to be xposed, day by day, and hour by hour, to this horror ?

He eyed her shrewdly.

" You haven't been turning stubborn," he said, " have you ?

And they've had to handle you already? And bring you to your senses? And so they have set you to brooming? But Bishop," with a frown, "gave me no notion of that. He said you came like a lamb."

"It's not that!" she cried. "It's nothing." It was not only that she was ashamed of the mark on her arm, and shrank from showing it. But his leering, insolent face terrified her. Though he was not tipsy, he had spent the small hours at a club, and the old port still hummed in his brain. "It's not that," she repeated firmly, and more quietly, hoping to get rid of him.

"Here," he answered, "let me look at it."

"No!"

"Pooh, nonsense!" he replied, pressing his advantage and entering the cell. "Nonsense, girl, let me look at it." He stepped nearer and peremptorily held out his hand. He could touch her. She could feel his hot breath on her cheek. "There's no room here for airs and tempers," he continued. "How, if I don't see it, am I to know that they have not been ill-treating you? Show me your wrist, girl."

But she recoiled from him into the farthest corner, holding her arms behind her. Her face was a picture of passionate defiance.

"Don't touch me!" she cried. "Don't come near me! You've no right to touch me. They have not hurt my wrist. I tell you it is nothing. And if you lay a finger on me I will scream!"

"Then," he said coolly, "they'll put you in a strait waistcoat, my lass, like the madman next door. That's all! You're mighty particular, but you forget where you are."

"You forget that I am a gentlewoman!" she cried. She could not retreat farther, but she looked at him as if she could have killed him. "Stand back, sir, I say!" she continued fiercely. "If you do not——"

"What will you do?" he asked. He enjoyed the situation, but he was not sure how far it would be prudent to push it. If he could contrive to surprise her wrist it would be odd if he could not snatch a kiss; and it was his experience—in his

nrish—that once fairly kissed, young women came off the gh horse, and proved amenable. "What'll you do," he ntinued facetiously, "you silly little prude?"

"Do?" she panted.

"Ay, Miss Dainty Damer, what'll you do?" with a feigned ovement as if to seize her. "You're not on the highway now, ou know! Nor free on bail! Nor is there a parson here!"

There he stopped—a faint, faint sound had fallen on his ear. e looked behind him, and stepped back as if a string drew im. And his face changed marvellously. In the doorway ood, hat in hand, the last person in the world he wished to ee there—Captain Clyne.

Clyne did not utter a syllable, but he beckoned to the other o come out to him. And with a chap-fallen look and a brick-ed face, Hornyold complied, and went out. Clyne closed he door on the girl—that she might not hear. And the two hen alone in the yard confronted one another. Clyne's face vas dark.

"I overheard your last words, Mr. Hornyold," he said in a oice low but stern. "And you are mistaken. There is a arson here—who has forgotten that he is a gentleman. It is vell for him, very well, that having forgotten that fact he emains a parson."

Hornyold tried to bluster, tried to face the other down and ave the situation. "I don't understand you!" he said. 'What does this mean?" He was the taller man and the igger, but Clyne's air of contemptuous mastery made him ppear the smaller. "I don't understand you," he repeated. 'The young lady—I merely came to visit her."

"The less," Clyne retorted, cutting him short, "said about ner the better! I understand perfectly, sir," with severity, "if you do not! Perfectly. And I desire you to understand that tt is your cloth only that protects you from the punishment you deserve!"

"That's easy said!" Hornyold answered with a poor ttempt at defiance. "Easy! What! Are we to have all this fuss about a chit that——"

"Silence, sir!" And Clyne's voice rang so loud that the

other not only obeyed but stepped back, as if he feared a blow. "Silence, sir! I know you well enough, and your past, to know that you cannot afford a scandal. And you know me! I advise you, therefore, when you have passed that door"—he pointed to the door leading to the prison lodge—"to keep a still tongue, and to treat this lady's name with respect. If not for the sake of your own character, for the sake, at any rate of your ill-earned stipends."

"Fine words!" Hornyold muttered, with a sneer of bravado.

"I will make them good," Clyne answered. And the look and the tone were such that the other, high as he wished to carry it, thought discretion the better part. He turned, still sneering, on his heel, and cutting the air with his whip made his way with what dignity he might to the door. He hesitated an instant and then disappeared, raging inwardly.

The moment he was gone Clyne's face relaxed. He passed his hand over his brow as if to recall his thoughts, and he sighed deeply. Then turning, he went slowly to Henrietta's door and tapped on it. The girl opened. "May I speak to you?" he said.

She did not answer, but she stepped out. She had recovered her self-control—quickly and completely, as women do; and her face told nothing. Whatever she thought of his intervention and of the manner in which he had routed Hornyold, she made no sign. She waited for him to speak. Yet she was aware not only of his downcast carriage, but of the change which sleepless nights and days of unutterable suspense had wrought in his face. His features were thinner and sharper, his temples more hollow: and there was a listening, hungry look in his eyes which did not quit them even when he dealt with other things than his loss.

"I have brought an order for your release," he said without any attempt at preface. "I have given bail for your appearance when needed. You are free to go. You have not to thank me, however, but Mr. Sutton, who discovered the letter that was written to you——"

She interrupted him by an exclamation.

"The letter," he continued mechanically, "that was written you making an appointment."

"Impossible!" she cried. "I destroyed it."

"He put it together again," he answered in the same tone. I—we are all indebted to him. Deeply indebted to him! don't know that there is anything more to be said," he ntinued dully, "except that I have come to take you back. was coming last evening, but the snow prevented me."

"And that is all—you have to say?"

He raised his eyes to hers with so much sadness in their pths, with such utter dejection in his looks, that in spite of l her efforts to keep it alive, her anger drooped. "Except at I am sorry," he said. "I am sorry. We have treated u—badly amongst us."

"You!" she said vindictively.

"I, if you like. Yes, I. It is true."

She called up the remembrance of the severity with which had judged her and the violence of which her wrist still re the traces. She pictured the disgrace of the prison and r fears, the nights of apprehension and the days of loneliness, , and the insolence of the wretch who had just left her—she ved all to him! All! And yet she could not keep her ger hot. She tried. She tried to show him something of at she felt. "You!" she repeated. "And now you ink," bitterly, "that I shall bear to go back to the place m which you sent me? Sent me in open disgrace—in that an's charge—with no woman with me?"

"God help me!" he said. "I know not what to think do! I thought that if I took you back myself, that would rhaps be best for all."

She was silent a moment, and then, "I have been very, very happy," she said in a different tone. And even while she id it she wondered why she complained to him, instead of ccusing him, and blaming him.

"I believe it," he said slowly. "We have wronged one not'ner. Let it stand at that."

"You believe," she said, "you do believe now, that I had o hand in stealing him?"

"I do."

"And knew naught of it," she insisted earnestly, "before or after?"

"I do."

"I would have cut off my hand first!" she said.

"I believe it," he answered sorrowfully.

Then they were both silent. And she wondered at herself. Why did she not hate him? Why did she not pour out on him the vials of her indignation? He had treated her badly, always badly. The wrong which she had done him in the first place, he had avenged by a gross insult to her womanhood. Then, not satisfied with that, he had been quick to believe the worst of her. He had been violent to her, he had bullied her: and when he found that she was not to be wrung to compliance with his orders, he had degraded her to a public prison as if she had been the worst of her sex—instead of his kith and kin. Even now, when his eyes were open to his injustice, even now, when he acknowledged that he owed amends, he came to her with a few poor words, meagre, scanty words, a miserable "I am sorry; you are free." And that was all. That was all!

And yet her rage drooped cold, her spirit seemed dead. The scathing reproaches, the fierce truths which had bubbled to her lips as she lay feverish on her prison-bed, the hot tears which had scalded her eyes, now that she might give them vent, now that he might be wounded by them and made to see his miserable meanness—were not! She stood mute and pale, wondering at the change, wondering at her mildness. And when he said with constraint, "The chaise is ready, will you make your preparations?" she went to do his bidding as if she had done nothing but obey him all her life.

CHAPTER XXVI

A RECONCILIATION

WHEN she had filled her band-box, and with a tearful laugh looked her last on the cell, she emerged from the yard. She found Captain Clyne awaiting her with his hand on the key of the prison gate. He saw her look doubtfully at the door of the Weighton's lodge; and he misread the look.

"I thought," he said, "that you would wish to be spared seeing more of them. I have," with a faint smile, "authority to open."

"Oh!" she answered, wrinkling her pretty brow in perplexity. "But I must see them, please. They have not been unkind to me, and I should not like to go without thanking them."

And before he could remonstrate, she had pushed open the lodge door and gone within.

"Now, Mrs. Weighton," he heard her cry, "you'll give me a character, won't you? I've behaved well now, haven't I?"

"Yes, miss, I'll say that," the woman answered stolidly.

"I haven't scratched nor screamed, and I've done as I've been bid? And you've had no use for the pump water?"

"I wish you hadn't swept out the yard," grudgingly; "'twas no order of mine, you'll remember. And don't you go and say that I've treated you ill!"

"I'll not! Indeed, I'll not!" Henrietta cried in a different tone. "I'll say you treated me very well. And that is for your little girl to make up for her disappointment. She'll be sorry I'm not going to be transported," with a hint of laughter in her voice. "And, Mrs. Weighton, I'm going to ask you something."

"Well, miss? If it is to oblige you?"

"Then, will you," in a tone touched by feeling, "if you have some day another like me, will you be as good to her? And remember that she may not have done anything wrong after all? Will you promise me?"

"I will, miss," Mrs. Weighton answered—very graciously for her. "But there, it isn't all has your sense! They takes and runs their heads against a brick wall! Either they scratches and screams, or they sulks and starves. And then we've to manage them, and we get the blame. I see you looked white and shivering when you come in, and I thought we'd have trouble with you. But there, you kept yourself in hand, and showed your sense—it's breeding does it—and you've naught to complain of in consequence. Wishing you well and kindly, miss!"

"I *shall* come to you for a character!" Henrietta replied with a laugh.

And she came out quickly and joined Captain Clyne, who, waiting with his hand on the lock, had heard all. He saw that though she laughed there was a tear in her eye; and the mingling of gaiety and sensibility in her conduct and her words was not lost upon him. She seemed to be bent on putting him in the wrong; on proving to him that she was not the silly-pated child he had deemed her! Even the praise of this jailor's wife, a coarse, cross-grained woman, sounded reproachfully in his ears. She was a better judge, it seemed, than he.

He put Henrietta into the chaise—the brisk, cold air of the winter morning was welcome to her; and they set off. Gnawed as he was by unhappy thoughts, wretchedly anxious as he was, he was silent for a time. He knew what he wanted, but he was ashamed to clutch at that advantage for the sake of which Sutton had resigned to him the mission. And for a long time he sat mute and brooding in his corner, the bright reflection of the snow adding pallor to his face. Yet he had eyes for her: he watched her without knowing it. And at the third milestone from Kendal, a little beyond Barnside, he saw her shiver.

"I am afraid you are cold?" he said, and wondering at

the rôle he played, he drew the wraps closer about her—with care, however, that his fingers should not touch her.

"No," she answered frankly. "I am not cold. But I remember passing that mile-stone. I was almost sick with fright when I passed it. So that it was all I could do not to try to get out and escape."

This was a revelation to him; and not a pleasant one. He winced.

"I am sorry," he said. "I am very sorry."

"Oh, I felt better when I was once in the prison," she answered lightly, "and with Mrs. Weighton. Before that I was afraid that there might be only men."

He suffered, in the hearing, something of the humiliation which she had undergone; was she not of his blood and his class—and a woman? But he could only say again that he was sorry. He was sorry.

A little later he forgot her in his own trouble: in thoughts of his child, thoughts which tortured him unceasingly, and became more active as his return to the Low Wood suggested the possibility of news. At one moment he saw the lad stretched on a pallet, ill and neglected, with no eye to pity, no hand to soothe; at another he pictured him in some dark hiding-place with fear for his sole companion. Or again he saw him beaten and ill-treated, shrieking for the father who had been always to him as heaven, omniscient and omnipotent—but shrieking in vain. And then the thought that to one so weak and young a little added hardship, another day of fear, an insignificant delay, might prove fatal—it was this thought that wrung the heart most powerfully, and went far towards maddening the man.

As he sat, watching the snow-covered fell slide by the chaise window, he was unconscious how clearly his misery was stamped on his features; or how pitiful was the hunger that lurked in the hollows under his eyes. But when the pace slackened, and the carriage began to crawl up the long hill beyond Broadgate, a faint sound caught his ear, and he remembered where he was, and turned. He saw that she was crying.

The same words came to his lips.

"I am sorry. I am very sorry," he said. "But it is over now."

"It's not that," she sobbed. "I am sorry for you! And for him! The poor boy! The poor boy! Last night—no, it was the night before—I thought that he called to me. I thought that he was there—in the room with me!"

"Don't!" he faltered. "I cannot bear it! Don't!"

But she did not heed.

"Yes," she repeated. "And ever since, ever since I've been thinking of him! I've wondered, I've wondered if I did right!"

He was silent, striving to regain control of himself. But at last, "Right in saying nothing?" he asked.

His voice shook a little, and he kept his eyes averted.

"Yes. I didn't know"—a little wildly—"I didn't know what to do. And then you threatened me, and I—it seemed unreasonable. For I wanted to help you, I did, I did indeed. But I dared not, I dared not give him up! I could not have his blood on my hands after—you know."

"But you no longer—care for him?"

"I loathe him!" she answered with a shudder. "But you see how it is. He trusted me, and I—how can I betray him? How can I? How can I?"

It was his business to prove to her that she could, that she ought, that she must; he was there to press her to it, to persuade her, to cajole her to it, if necessary. He had come for that. But the words it behoved him to use stuck in his throat. And the chaise rolled on, and rolled on. And still, but with the sweat standing on his brow, he sat silent, looking out on the barren landscape, as the stone fences slid quickly by, or open moorland took their place. In ten minutes they would be at the Low Wood. Already through her window she could see the long stretch of sparkling water, and the wooded isles, and the distant smoke of Ambleside.

Their silence was a tragedy. She could save him by a word, and she could not say the word. She dared not say it. And he—the pleas he should have used died on his lips. It behoved

him to cast himself on her mercy ; he was there for that purpose. It behoved him to work on her feelings, to plead with her, to weep, to pray. And he did not, he could not. And the minutes passed ; the wheels rolled and rolled. Soon they would be at the end of their journey. He was like a famishing man who sees a meal within reach, but cannot touch it ; or like one oppressed by a terrible nightmare, who knows that he has but to say a word, and he is freed from the incubus—yet his tongue refuses its office. And now the carriage, having climbed the rise, began to roll more quickly down the hill. In a very few minutes they would be at the end of their journey.

Suddenly—"What can we do?" she cried piteously. "What can we do? Can we do nothing? Nothing?"

And neither of the two thought the union of interests strange ; any more than in their absorption they noted the strangeness of this drive in company—over some of the very road which she had traversed when she eloped with another to avoid a marriage with him.

He shook his head in dumb misery. Three days of suspense, and as many sleepless nights, the wear and tear of many journeys, had told upon him. He had had but little rest, and that induced by sheer exhaustion. He had taken his meals standing, he had passed many hours of each day in the saddle. He could no longer command the full resources of his mind, and though he still held despair at arm's length, though he still by force of habit commanded himself, and was stern and reticent, despondency gained ground upon him. It was she who almost at the last moment suggested a plan that if not obvious, was simple, and to the purpose.

"Listen," she said. "Listen, sir! Why should not I do this? Go myself to—to him, to Walterson?"

"You?" he answered, with undisguised repugnance.

"Yes, I! I! Why not?" she asked. "And learn if he has the child, or knows where it is. Then if he be innocent of this last wickedness, as I believe him to be innocent, we shall learn the fact without harming him ; always supposing that I go to him, undetected. And I can do that—with your help! That must be your care."

He pondered.

"But if," he said slowly, "you do this and he have the child? What then? Have you thought of the consequences to yourself? If he be privy to a crime which none but desperate men would commit, what of you? He will be capable of harming you. Or if he scruple, there will be others, the men who took my child, who will stick at nothing to keep their necks out of the noose, and to remove a witness who else might hang them."

"I am not afraid," she said firmly.

"God bless you!" he said. "God bless you! But I am."

"What?" she cried, and she turned to him, honestly astonished. "You? You dissuade me when it is your child that is in peril?"

"Be silent!" he said harshly. "Be silent! For your own sake, if not for mine! Why do you tempt me? Why do you torture me? Do you think, Henrietta, that I have not enough to tempt me without your help? No, no," more quietly, "I have done you wrong already! I know not how I can make amends. But at least I will not add to the wrong."

"I only ask you to leave me to myself," she said hardily. "The rest I will do, if I am not watched."

"The rest!" he said with a groan. "But what a rest it is! Why should these men spare you if you go to them? They did not spare my boy!"

"They took the boy," she answered, "to punish you. They will not have the same motive for harming me. I mean—they will not harm me with the idea of hurting you."

"Ay, but——"

"They will know that it will not affect you."

He did not deny the statement, but for some time he drummed on the window with his fingers.

"That may be," he said at length. "Yet I'll not do it! And I'll not let you do it. Instead, do you tell me where the man is and I will go to him myself. And I will tell no tales."

"You will keep his secret?"

"I will."

"But I will not do that!" she answered. And she laughed

in the reaction of her spirits. She knew in some subtle way that she was reinstated ; that he would never think very badly of her again. And the knowledge that he trusted her was joy, she scarcely knew why. But, " I shall not do that ! " she repeated. " Have you thought what will be the consequence to you if he be guilty ? They will be three to one, and they will murder you."

" And you think that I can let you run the risk ? "

" There will be no risk for me. I am different."

" I can't believe it," he said. " I wish "—despairingly—" I wish to God I could believe it ! "

" Then do believe it," she said.

" I cannot ! I cannot ! "

" You have his letter," she replied. And she was going to say more, she was going to prove that she could undertake the matter with safety, when the chaise began to slacken speed, and perforce she cut her reasoning short. " You will let me do it ? " she said, laying her hand on his sleeve.

" No, no ! "

" You have only to draw them off."

" I shall not ! " he cried, almost savagely. " I shall not ! Do you think I am a villain ? Do you think I care nothing what happens——"

The jerk caused by the chaise coming to a stand before the inn cut his words short. Clyne thrust out his head.

" Any news ? " he asked eagerly. " Has anything been heard ? "

Mr. Sutton, who had been on the watch for their arrival, came forward to the chaise door. He answered Clyne, but his eyes, looking beyond his patron, sought Henrietta's in modest deprecation ; much as the dog which is not assured of its reception seeks, yet deprecates its master's glance.

" No," he said, " none. I am sorry for it. Nadin has not yet returned, nor Bishop, though we are expecting both."

" Where's Bishop ? "

" He has gone with a party to Lady Holm. There's an idea that the isles were not thoroughly searched in the first place. But he should be back immediately."

A slight hardening of the lines of the mouth was Clyne's' only answer. He helped Henrietta to alight, and was turning with her to enter the house, when he remembered himself. He laid his hand on the chaplain's arm.

"This is the gentleman," he said, "whom you have to thank for your release, Henrietta."

"I am sure," she said, "that I am greatly obliged to him." But her tone was cold.

"He did everything," Clyne said. "He left no stone unturned. Let me do him the justice of saying that we two must share the blame of what has happened, while the whole credit is his."

"I am very much obliged to him," she said again. And she bowed.

And that was all. That, and a look which told him that she resented his interference, that she hated to be beholden to him, that she held him linked for ever with her humiliation. He, and he alone, had stood by her two days before, when all had been against her, and Captain Clyne had been as flint to her. He, and he alone, had wrought out her deliverance and reinstated her. And her thanks were a haughty movement of the head, two sentences as cold as the wintry day, a smile as hard as the icicles that still depended in the shade of the eaves. And when she had spoken, she walked to the door without another glance—and every step was on the poor man's heart.

Mrs. Gilson had come down two steps to meet her. She had seen all.

"Well, you're soon back, miss," she said. "Some have the luck all one way."

"That cannot be said of me!" Henrietta retorted, smiling. But her colour was high. She remembered how she had descended those steps.

"No?" Mrs. Gilson responded. "When you bring the bad on yourself and the good is just a gift."

"A gift?"

"Ay! And one for which you're not over grateful!" with all her wonted grimness. "But that's the way of the world!

"Grind as you will, miss, it's the lower mill-stone suffers, and the upper that cries out! Still——"

Mr. Sutton heard no more; for Henrietta had passed with the landlady into the house; and he turned himself about with a full heart and walked away. He had done so much for her! He had risked his livelihood, his patron, his position, to save her! He had paced this strand with every fibre in him tingling with pity for her! Ay, and when all others had put her out of their thoughts! And for return, she went laughing into the house, and paid no heed to him—to the poor parson.

True, he had expected little. But he had expected more than this. He had not hoped for much; or it is possible that he had not resigned the opportunity of bringing her back. But he had hoped for more than this—for the tearful thanks of a pair of bright eyes, for the clasp of a grateful hand, for a word or two that might remain in his memory always.

And bitterness welled up in his heart, and at the first gate, at which he could stand unseen, he let his face fall on his hands. He cursed the barriers of caste, the cold pride of these aristocrats, even his own pallid insignificance—since he had as hungry a heart as panted in the breast of the handsomest dandy. He could not hate her; she was young and thoughtless, and in spite of himself his heart made excuses for her. But he hated the world, and the system, and the miserable conventions that shackled him; ay, hated them as bitterly for the time as the dark-faced gipsy girl whose eyes he found upon him, when at last a sound caused him to look up.

She grinned at him slyly, and he gave back the look with resentment. He had met her once or twice in the lanes and about the inn, and marked her for a rustic beauty of a savage type. Now he waited frowning for her to pass. But she only smiled more insolently, and lifting her voice, sang:

"But still she replied, sir,
I pray let me be!
If ever I love a man,
The master for me!"

A dull flush overspread his face. "Go your way!" he said.

"Ay, I'll go," Bess replied. "And so will she!

In pin, out trout!
Three's a meal and one's nought!

'One's nought! One's nought!'" she continued to carol.

And laughing ironically, she went up the road—not without looking back once or twice to enjoy a surprise which was only exceeded by the chaplain's wrath. What did the girl know? And what was it to her? A common gipsy drab such as she, how did she come to guess these things? And where the joint lay at which to aim the keen shafts of her wit?

CHAPTER XXVII

BISHOP CAUGHT NAPPING

"I WILL not do it! I will not do it!" Those had been Clyne's last words on the subject; uttered and reiterated with a heat which proved that, in coming to this decision, he fought against his own heart as much as against her arguments. "I will not do it! But do you," with something of his former violence, "tell me where he is! Tell me at once, and I will go and question him."

"And I," she had answered with spirit, "will not tell you." At that he had looked at her with the old sternness, but her eyes had no longer fallen before his. And then he had been called away to follow one of the hasty clues, the wild-goose scents which were reported from hour to hour—by pedlars coming in from the dales, or by hazy parish constables who took every stranger for a rogue. Twice he had turned in his saddle, twice reined in his horse, before he passed out of sight; and she had known that he wrestled with himself, that he was near, very near, to giving way, and sacrificing her upon the altar of his child. But he had gone on, and not returned. And though it had grieved her to see how drawn and haggard was his face, how near to failing the wiry strength of his frame, she had rejoiced on her own account. He might say what he liked, forbid as he chose, it would go hard with her if she could not find the opportunity she needed; if she, who had suffered all along and in the esteem of all, did not make use of the means of clearing herself which remained to her.

Courage at least should not be wanting; and she would be running, too. Already she dreamed of a happy return with the child; and her cheeks grew warm and her eyes soft as she conjured up the scene, and imagined herself leading the boy

to his father and receiving his thanks. Then he would confess —more fully than he had yet confessed—how he had wronged her, how far from her thoughts had been harm to the boy. And she—ah, but she must first do her part. She must first do that which she had to do.

So she went craftily about her task, counting up those whom she had to fear and ticking them off. Before Clyne had left the house a mile behind him she had learned where Nadin was, and a second officer whom she suspected of watching her movements. They were abroad, and she had naught to fear from them. There remained Mr. Sutton and Bishop. For the former, "Horrid man!" she thought in her ingratitude, "I suppose he will look to be thanked every time I see him!" And she was confirmed in this, when she marked him down. He was walking to and fro before the door.

"I must go out at the back!" she concluded. But there still remained the bluff but civil Bishop. She had little doubt that he was the Cerberus left to guard her. And no doubt at all when she learned from Modest Ann that he was taking his early dinner in the coffee-room with the door wide open.

"Waiting to see if I go out," she said.

"Well, miss," Ann answered, "I shouldn't wonder if he was!"

Henrietta looked at her very kindly.

"Don't you think," she asked slowly, "that you could somehow get rid of him, Ann?"

The woman looked as much troubled as one of her hard features could look.

"No, miss, I don't think I could," she said.

"You are afraid?" gently.

"I'm not afraid of him," with some asperity. "Bless the man, no! I'm not afraid of no man nowhere! But I am afraid of the missus!"

"Ah! And you don't think that you could tell him that I wish to see him upstairs? And then when he comes up and finds the room empty—that I shall be down from my bedroom in five minutes?"

"It wouldn't be true."

"No," softly. "Perhaps not."

Modest Ann looked dreadfully perplexed. "You'll get me into trouble, miss," she said. "I know you will."

"Then I'll get you out again," the fair tempter retorted. "I will indeed, Ann."

"But if you get into trouble yourself, miss? What then?"

Henrietta turned with the air of a martyr to the window and looked out. "I thought you liked me a little," she murmured presently, and dried a tear that was not there. "I thought you would do a small thing for me."

The woman took her hand and kissed it softly.

"I will, miss, drat me if I don't!" she said. "I'll do what you wish, come what may of it! So there."

Henrietta turned to her, her face in a glow. "You dear, kind thing!" she cried, "I'll never forget it. You are the only one who is not against me."

Ann shook her head. "I hope I'll not be the one to repent it!" she muttered, with a last spark of doubt.

"Indeed, indeed you won't! But now"—naively—"shall I lock him in or not?"

"In the room?"

"Yes."

"Here, miss? Why, miss, he'd rouse the house!"

"Not if we tied up the bell-pull first!" she suggested.

But Modest Ann was aghast at the thought. "Lord, miss, he'd only have to open the window and shout! And there's the parson walking up and down the road, and the fat'd be in the fire in two twos!"

"So it would," Henrietta admitted reluctantly. "I see. So you must just entice him here, and say I'll be down from my bedroom in three minutes. And I hope he'll be patient. As for you, you'll know no more than that I asked you to fetch him, and said I should be with him at once."

"Well, they can't touch me for that," Modest Ann said; and she agreed, but with hesitation. "I don't think he'll be so simple," she said. "That's a fact. He'll not come up."

But he did. He walked straight into the trap, and Henrietta, who was waiting in ambush in the dark passage while

he passed, sped downstairs, and would have escaped by the back door without meeting a soul, if Mrs. Gilson had not by bad luck been crossing the yard. The landlady caught sight of the girl, and raising her voice cried to her to stop. For an instant Henrietta hesitated. Then she thought it prudent to comply. She returned slowly.

"Come, come, miss, this won't do!" the landlady said tartly. "You're not going off like that all of a hurry! You bide a bit and consider who's bail for you."

"Not you!" Henrietta retorted mutinously. And as this was true, for the Gilsons' bail had been discharged, the first hit was hers.

"Oh, so you're saucy now, miss!" the landlady retorted. "Brag's the dog, is it?"

"No, but——"

"It's so, it seems! Any way, you'll please to tell me, young lady, where you are going in such a hurry."

But Henrietta was at bay. She knew that if she were delayed even two minutes her chance was gone; for Bishop would be on her heels. So, "That's my business!" she answered. And determined to escape, even by force, she turned about, light as a roe, tossed her head defiantly, and was off through the gate in a twinkling.

Mrs. Gilson was left gaping. She was not of a figure to take up the chase, for like many good housewives of her time, she seldom left her own premises except to go to church. But she was none the less certain that Henrietta ought to be followed. "There's a fine trollop!" she cried. "It won't be long before she runs her head into harm! Where's that blockhead, Bishop?" And she bundled away to the coffee-room to tell him that the girl was gone.

She arrived scant of breath—and he was not there. The coffee-room was empty, and the landlady, knowing that he had stayed in the house on purpose to keep an eye on Henrietta's movements, swept out again, fuming. In the passage she caught sight of Modest Ann and called her. "Where's that man, Bishop?" she asked.

Ann stared as if she had never heard the name.

"Bishop?" she repeated stolidly.

"What else did I say?"

"He's with the young lady."

"He's nothing of the kind!" Mrs. Gilson retorted, her temper rising.

"Well, he went to her," Ann returned. "He went——"

But Mrs. Gilson did not stay to hear. She had caught sight of Mr. Sutton walking past the open door, and aware that a second now was worth a minute by and by, she hurried out to him. "Your reverence! Here!" she cried. And when he turned, surprised by the address, "The young lady's gone!' she continued. "Slipped out at the back, and she'll be God knows where in two minutes! Do you follow, sir, and keep her in sight, or there's no knowing what may happen!" And she pointed through the house to indicate the nearest way.

Mr. Sutton's face turned a dull red. But he did not move, nor make any show of acting on the suggestion. Instead,

"Miss Damer has gone out?" he said slowly.

"To be sure!" the landlady cried, in a fume at the delay. "And if she is not followed at once——"

"Where's the officer?" he asked, interrupting her.

"Heaven knows, or I should not come to you!" Mrs. Gilson retorted. "Do you go after her before she's beyond catching!"

But Mr. Sutton shook his head with an obstinate look. "No," he said. "It's not my business, ma'am. I'd like to oblige you after your kindness yesterday, but I've made up my mind not to interfere with the young lady. I followed her once," he continued, in a lower tone and with a gloomy air—"and I've repented it!"

"You'll repent it a deal more if you don't follow her now!" the landlady retorted. She was in a towering passion by this time. "You'll repent it finely if anything happens to her. That you will, my man! Don't you know that Captain Clyne left word that she wasn't to be let go out alone? Then go, man, after her, before it is too late. And don't be a sawny!"

"I shall not," he answered firmly.

She saw then that he was not to be moved; and with a half-smothered word, not of the politest, she turned short

about to find Bishop; though she was well aware that so much time had been wasted that the thing was now desperate. Again she asked Ann, who had been listening to the colloquy, where Bishop was.

"He went up to the young lady," Ann answered.

"He did not, I tell you. For she is not up, but out!"

"Perhaps he has followed her."

"Perhaps you're a liar!" Mrs. Gilson cried. And advancing on Ann with a threatening gesture, "If you don't tell me where he is, I'll shake you, woman! Do you hear?"

Ann hesitated; when who should appear at the foot of the stairs but Bishop himself, looking foolish.

"Where's the young lady?" he asked.

"Where's your wits?" Mrs. Gilson retorted. "She's out by the back-door this five minutes. If you want to catch her you'd best be quick!" And as with a face of consternation he hurried through the house, "She didn't turn Ambleside way!" she called after him. "That's all I know!"

This was something, but it left, as Bishop knew, two roads open. For, besides the field-path which led up the hill and through the wood, and so over the shoulder to Troutbeck, a farm lane turned short to the right behind the out-buildings, and ran into the lower road towards Calgarth and Bowness. Which had the girl taken? Bishop paused in doubt, and gazed either way. She was not to be seen on the slope leading up to the wood; but then, she was not to be seen on the other path. Still, he espied something there which gave him hope. On the hillside the snow had melted, but here and there on the north side of a wall, or in a sheltered spot, it lay; and a little way along the farm-road was such a patch extending across its width. Bishop hastened to the place, and a glance told him that the girl had not gone that way. With rising hopes he set off up the hill.

He was stout and short-winded, more at home in Cornhill than on real hills, and he did not expect to gain upon her. But he felt sure that he should find her track: and its direction where the fells were so sparsely peopled must tell him much. He remembered that it was at the upper end of the wood that

had surprised her on the occasion when her agitation had
ll him to question her. He resolved to make as quickly
possible for that point.

True enough, where the path entered the wood he came
on her footsteps imprinted in the snow ; and he pushed on,
rough the covert to the upper end. Here, just within the
cket which opened on the road, lay some drifted snow ; and
much to recover his breath, as because he thought it needful,
stopped to note the direction of her footprints. Alas, the
ow bore no trace of feet ! No one, it was clear, had passed
rough the gate that day.

This was a check, and he turned his back on the road, and
opped his forehead with a handkerchief which he took from
s hat. He gazed, nonplussed, into the recesses of the wood
rough which he had passed. The undergrowth, which was
oak—with here and there a clump of hollies—still carried
screen of brown leaves, doomed to fall with the spring, but
fficient in the present to mask a fugitive. Moreover, in the
mp bottom, where the bridge spanned the rivulet, a com-
ny might have lain hidden ; and above him, where the
ood climbed the shoulder, there were knolls and dells, and
nprobed depths of yellow bracken, that defied the eye.
etween him and this background the brown trunks stood at
tervals, shot with the gold of the declining sun, or backed by
cold patch of snow : and the scene had been beautiful, in its
sset livery of autumn blended with winter, if he had had eyes
r it, or for aught but the lurking figure he hoped to detect.

That figure, however, he could not see. And again he
ooped, and inspected the snow beside the gate. No, she had
ot passed, that was certain ; and baffled, and in a most un-
appy mood, he raised himself and listened. Above him a
quirrel, scared by his approach, was angrily clawing a branch ;
robin, drawn by the presence of a man, alighted near him,
nd hopped nearer. But no rustle of flying skirts, no sound
f snapping twigs or falling stones came to him. And, a city
an by training, and much at a loss here, he mopped his brow
nd swore. Every second was precious, and he was losing
inutes. He was losing minutes, and learning nothing !

Was she hiding in the wood pending his departure ? Or had she doubled back the way she had come, and so escaped, laughing and contemptuous ? Or had she passed out by some gate unknown to him ? Or climbed the fence ? Or was she even now meeting her man in some hiding-place among the hollies, or in some fern-clad retreat out of sight and hearing ?

Bishop could not tell. He was wholly at a loss. For a few seconds he entertained the wild notion of beating the wood for her ; but he had not taken a dozen steps before he set it aside, and went back to the gate. Henrietta, on the occasion when her bearing had confirmed his suspicions, had descended the road to the wood. He would go up the road. And even as he thought of this, and laid his hand on the gate to open it, he heard a footstep coming heavily down the road.

He went to meet the man ; a tall, grinning rustic, who bore a sheep on his shoulders with its fore and hind feet in either hand, so that it looked like a giganitc ruff. At a sign from the officer he stopped, but did not lower his burden.

" Meet anybody as you came down the road, my lad ? " Bishop asked.

" Noa," the man drawled.

" Where have you come from ? Troutbeck ? "

" Ay."

" You haven't met a young lady ? "

" Noa ! Met no soul. master ! " the man answered, in the accent not only of Westmoreland, but of truth.

" Not even a pretty girl ? "

The man grinned more widely. " Noa, not nobody," he said.

And he went on down the road, but twice looked back, turning sheep and all, to see what the stranger would be at.

Bishop stood for a few moments pondering the question, and then he followed the man.

" If she is not up the road," he argued, " it is ten to one that she started up the hill to throw us off the scent. And she's slipped down herself towards Calgarth. It's that way, too, she went to meet him at night."

And gradually quickening his steps as the case seemed clearer and his hopes grew stronger, he was soon out of sight.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GOLDEN SHIP

TWO minutes after Bishop had passed from sight, Henrietta rose from a dip in the fern ; in which she had lain all ke time, as snugly hidden, though within eyeshot of him, a hare in its form. She cast a wary glance round. Then ke hastened to the gate, but did not pass through it. She new too much. She chose a weak place in the fence, scaled with care, and sprang lightly into the road. She glanced o and down, but no one was in sight, and pleased with her everness, she set off at a quick pace up the hill.

The sun lacked an hour of setting. She might count on vo hours of daylight, and her spirits rose. As the emerald reen of the lower hills shone the brighter for the patches of ow, harbingers of winter, which flecked them, so her spirits se the higher for troubles overpast or to come. She felt no ar, no despondency, none of the tremors with which she had ntered on her night adventure. A gaiety of which she did ot ask herself the cause, a heart as light as her feet and as lithe as the black-bird's note, carried her on. She who had wakened that morning in a prison could have sung and carolled ; she walked. The beauty of the hills about her, of the lake elow her, blue here, there black, filled her with happiness.

And the cause ? She did not seek for the cause. Certainly e did not find it. It was enough for the moment that she ad been prisoned and was free ; and that in an hour, or two ours at most, she would return with the child or with news. nd then, the sweet vengeance of laying it in its father's arms ! ne whom he had insulted, whom he had mishandled, whom e had treated so remorselessly—it would be from her hand

that he would receive his treasure, the child whom he had told her that she hated. He would have some cause then to talk of making amends! And need to go about and about before he found a way to be quits with her!

She did not analyse beyond that point the feeling of gaiety and freedom which possessed her. She would put him in the wrong. She would heap coals of fire on his head. That sufficed. If there welled up within her heart another thought, if since morning she had a feeling and a hope that thrilled her and lent to all the world this smiling guise, she was conscious of the effect, unconscious of the cause. The wrist which Clyne had twisted was still black and blue and tender to the touch. She blushed lest any eye fall on it, or any guess how he had treated her. But—she blushed also, when she was alone, and her own eyes dwelt on it. And dwell on it sometimes they would; for, strange to say, the feeling of shame, if it was shame, was not unpleasant.

She met no one. She reached the gate of Starvecrow Farm, unseen as she believed. But heedful of the old saying, that fields have eyes and woods have ears, she looked carefully round her before she laid her hand on the gate. Then, in a twinkling, she was round the house like a lapwing and tapping at the door.

To her first summons she got no answer. And effacing herself as much as possible, she cast a wary eye over the place. The garden was as ragged and desolate, the house as bald and forbidding, the firs about it as gloomy, as when she had last seen them. But the view over sloping field and green meadow, wooded knoll and shining lake, made up for all. And her only feeling as she tapped again and more loudly was one of impatience. Even the memory of the squalid old man whom she had once seen there did not avail to alarm her in her buoyant mood.

This was well, perhaps. For when she knocked a third time, in alarm lest the person she sought should be gone, and her golden ship with him, it was that very old man who opened the door. And, not unnaturally, it seemed to Henrietta that with its opening a shadow fell across the landscape and blurred

e sunshine of the day. The ape-like creature who gaped at r, the cavern-like room behind him, the breath of the close : that came from him, inspired disgust, if not alarm, and ecked the girl in the full current of content.

He did not speak. But he moved his toothless gums un-easantly, and danced up and down in an odd fashion from s knees, without moving his feet. Meanwhile his reddened es thrust near to hers gleamed with suspicion. On her side enrietta was taken aback by his appearance, and for some oments the girl stared at him in consternation. What could e expect from such a creature ?

At length, " I wish to see Walterson," she said in a low tone there might be listeners in the house. " Do you understand ? o you understand ? " she repeated more loudly.

He set his head, which was bald in patches, on one side ; as to indicate that he was deaf. And with his eyes on hers, he opped his lower jaw and waited for her to repeat what she ad said.

She saw nothing else for it, and she crushed down her pugnance.

" Let me come in," she said. " Do you hear ? I want to lk to you. Let me come in."

To remain where she was, talking secrets to a deaf man, as to invite discovery.

He understood her this time, and grudgingly he opened the oor a little wider. He stood aside and Henrietta entered. n the act she cast a backward look over her shoulder, and aught through the doorway a last prospect of the hills and ne mid-lake and the green islets off Bowness—set like jewels n its gleaming breast—all clear-cut in the brisk winter air. he felt the beauty of the scene, but she did not guess what ings were to happen to her before she looked again upon its llow.

Not that when the door was shut upon her, the room in hich she found herself did not something appal her. The re had been allowed to sink low, and the squalor and the chill apid air of the place wrapped her about. But she was aturally fearless, and she cheered herself with the thought

that she was stronger than the grinning old man who stood before her. She was sure that if he resorted to violence she could master him. Still, she was in haste. She was anxious to do what she had to do, and escape.

And: "I must see Walterson!" she told him loudly, looking down on him, and instinctively keeping her skirts clear of the unswept floor. "He was here, I know, some days ago," she continued sharply. "Don't say you don't understand, because you do! But fetch him, or tell me where he is. Do you hear?"

The old man moved his jaw to and fro. He grinned senilely.

"He was here, eh?" he drawled.

"Yes, he was here," Henrietta returned, taking a tone of authority with him. "And I must see him."

"Ay?"

"It is to do no harm to him," she explained. "Tell him Miss Damer is here. Miss Damer, do you hear? He will see me, I am sure."

"Ay?" he said again in the same half-vacant tone. "Ay?"

But he did not go beyond that; nor did he make any movement to comply. And she was beginning to think him wholly imbecile when his eyes left hers and fixed themselves on the front of her riding-coat. Then, after a moment's silence, during which she patted the floor with her foot in fierce impatience, he raised his claw-like hand and stretched it slowly towards her throat.

She stepped back, but as much in anger as in fear. Was the man imbecile, or very wicked?

"What do you want?" she asked sharply. "Don't you understand what I have said to you?"

For the moment he seemed to be disconcerted by her movement. He stood in the same place, slowly blinking his weak eyes at her. Then he turned and moved in a slip-shod fashion to the hearth and threw on two or three morsels of touch-wood, causing the fire to leap up and shoot a flickering light into the darker corners of the room. The gleam discovered his dingy bed and dingier curtains, and the shadowy entrance to the staircase in which Henrietta had once seen Walterson. And

sshowed Henrietta herself, and awakened a spark in her gry eyes.

The old man, still stooping, looked round at her, his chin on shoulder. And slowly, with an odd crab-like movement, edged his way back to her. She watched his approach with growing fear of the gloomy house and the silence and the k staircase. She began to think he was imbecile, or rse, and that nothing could be got from him. And she s in two minds about retreating—so powerfully do silence d mystery tell on the nerves—when he paused in his adnce, and, raising his lean, twitching hand, pointed to her k.

"Give it me," he whimpered. "Give it me—and I'll say, ybe, where he is."

She frowned.

"What?" she asked. "What do you want?"

"The gold!" he croaked. "The gold! At your neck, s! That sparkles! Give it me!" opening and shutting lean fingers. "And I'll—I'll see what I can do."

She carried her fingers to the neck of her gown and touched tiny gold medal struck to celebrate the birth of the Prins Charlotte, which she wore as a clasp at her throat. d relieved to find that he meant no worse, she smiled. e scarecrow before her was less of an "innocent" than had judged him. It was so much the better for her rpose.

"I cannot give you this," she said. "But I'll give you its ue, if you will bring me to Walterson."

"No, no, give it me," he whimpered, grimacing at her and lking feeble clutches in the air. "Give it me!"

"I cannot, I say," she repeated. "It was my mother's, d I cannot part with it. But if," she continued patiently, ou will do what I ask I will give you its value, old man, ther day."

"Give now!" he retorted. "Give now!" And leering th childish cunning,

> "Trust the day and greet the morrow!
> Groats in pouch ne'er yet brought sorrow!

Na, na, Hinkson, old Hinkson, trusts nobody. Give it me now, lass! And I—I know what I know." And in a cracked and quavering voice, swaying himself to the measure,

> "It is an old saying
> That few words are best,
> And he that says little
> Shall live most at rest.
> And I by my gossips
> Do find it right so,
> Therefore I'll spare speech,
> But—I know what I know.

I know what I know!" he repeated, blinking with doting astuteness,

> "Therefore I'll spare speech,
> But—I know what I know!"

Henrietta stared. She would have given him the money, any money in her power. But imprudently prudent, she had brought none with her.

"I can't give it you now," she said. "But I will give it you to-morrow if you will do what I ask. Otherwise I shall go and you will get nothing."

He did not reply, but he began to mumble with his jaws and dance himself up and down from his knees, as at her first entrance; with his monstrous head on one side and his red-lidded eyes peering at her. In the open, in the sunshine, she would not have feared him; she would have thought him only grotesque in his anger. But shut up in this hideous den with him, in this atmosphere of dimly perceived danger, she felt her flesh creep. What if he struck her treacherously, or took her by surprise? She had read of houses where the floors sank under doomed strangers, or the testers of beds came down on them in their sleep. He was capable, she was sure, of anything; even of murdering her for the sake of the two or three guineas' worth of gold which she wore at her neck. Yet she held her ground.

"Do you hear?" she said with spirit. "If you do not tell me, I shall go. And you will get nothing!"

He nodded cunningly.

"Bide a bit!" he said in a different tone. "Sit ye down, lass, sit ye down! Bide a bit, and I'll see."

He slippered his way across the floor to get a stool for her. But when he had lifted the stool from the floor in his shaking hands, she marked with a quick leap of the heart that he put himself between her and the door, and that, with the possession of the stool, his looks were altered. The heavy block wavered in his grasp and he seemed to pant and stagger under its weight. But there was an ugly light in his eyes as he sidled nearer and nearer to her; a light that meant murder. She was sure that he was going to leap upon her. And she remembered that no one, no one knew where she was, no one had seen her enter the house. She had only her own strength to look to, only her own courage and coolness, if she would escape this creature.

"Put down that stool!" she said.

"Eh?"

"Put down that stool!" she repeated, firmly. And she kept her eyes on him, resisting the fatal temptation to glance at door or window. "Do you hear me? Put down that stool!"

He hesitated, but her glance never wavered. And slowly and unwillingly, he obeyed. Shaking as with the palsy, and with his mouth fallen open—so that he looked more imbecile and less human than ever—he relinquished the stool.

She drew a deep breath.

"Now," she said bravely, though she was conscious that the perspiration had broken out on her brow, "tell me at once where he is?"

But the old miser, though his will had yielded to hers, did not answer. He seemed to be shaken by his defeat, and to be at once feeble and furious. Glaring askance at her, he tottered to the settle on the hearth and sat down on it, breathing heavily.

"Curse her! Curse her! Curse her!" he gibbered low, but audibly. And he licked his lips and gnashed his toothless gums at her in impotent rage. "Curse her! Curse her!" The firelight, now rising, now falling, showed him sitting

there mopping and mowing, like some unclean Eastern idol; or, again, masked his revolting ugliness.

The girl thought him horrible, thought it all horrible. She felt for an instant as if she were going to faint. But she had gained the victory, she had mastered him, and she would make one last attempt to attain her object.

"You wicked old man," she said, "you would have hurt me! You wicked monster! But I am stronger, much stronger than you, and I do not fear you. Now I am going unless you tell me at once."

He ceased to gibber to her. He beckoned to her to approach him. But she shook her head. He no longer had the stool, but he might have some weapon hidden under the seat of the settle. She distrusted him.

"No," she said, "I am not coming near you. You are a villainous old man, and I don't trust you."

"Have you no—no money?" he whimpered. "Nothing to give old Hinkson? Poor old Hinkson?" with a feeble movement of his fingers on his knees, as if he drew bed-clothes about him.

"Where is Walterson?" she repeated. "Tell me at once."

"How do I know?" he whined. "I don't know."

"He was here. You do know. Tell me."

He averted his eyes and held out a palsied hand.

"Give!" he answered. "Give!"

But she was relentless.

"Tell me," she rejoined, "or I go, and you get nothing." She was in earnest now, for she began to despair of drawing anything from him, and she saw nothing for it but to go and return another time. "Do you hear?" she continued. "If you do not speak for me, I—I shall go to those who will know how to make you speak."

It was an idle threat; and one which she had no intention of executing. But the rage into which it flung him—no rage is so fierce as that which is mingled with fear—fairly appalled her. "Eh? eh?" he cried, his voice rising to an inarticulate scream. "Eh? You will, will you?" And he rose to his feet and clawed the air as if, were she within reach, he would

ıve torn her to pieces. " You devil, you witch, you besom ! to ! " he cried. " I'll sort you ! I'll sort you ! I'll fetch one ; shall—as shall dumb you ! "

There was something so demoniacal in the old dotard's assion, in its very futility, in its very violence, that the girl ırank like Frankenstein before the monster she had aroused. ne turned to save herself, for, weak as he was, he seemed to e about to fling himself upon her ; and she had no stomach r the contact. But as she turned—with a backward glance : him, and an arm stretched towards the door to make sure the fastening—a shadow cast by a figure which passed efore the lattice flitted across the floor between them, and a and rested on the latch.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DARK MAID

THE substance followed the shadow so quickly that Henrietta had not time to consider her position before the latch rose. The door opened, and a girl entered hurriedly. The surprise was common to both, for the newcomer had closed the door behind her before she discerned Henrietta, and then her action was eloquent. She turned the key in the lock, and stood frowning, with her back to the door, and one shoulder advanced as if to defend herself. The other hand remained on the fastening.

"You here?" she muttered.

"Yes," Henrietta replied, returning her look, and speaking with a touch of pride. For the feeling of dislike was instinctive; if Bess's insolent smile had not stamped itself on her memory—on that first morning at the Low Wood, which seemed so very, very long ago—Henrietta had still known that she was in the presence of an enemy. "Are you—his daughter?" she continued.

"Yes," Bess answered. She did not move from the door, and she maintained her attitude, as if the surprise that had arrested her still kept her hand on the key. "Yes," she repeated, "I am. You don't"—with a glance from one to the other—"like him, I see!"

"That is no matter," Henrietta answered with dignity. "I am not here for him, nor to see him; I wish to see——"

"Your lover?"

Henrietta winced, and her face turned scarlet. And now there was no question of the hostility between them. Bess's dark, smiling face was insolence itself.

"What? Wasn't he that?" the gipsy girl continued. If he was not"—with a coarse look—"what do you want with him?"

Silenced for the moment by the other's taunt, Henrietta now found her voice.

"I wish to see him," she said. "That is enough for you."

"Oh, is it?" Bess replied. She had taken her hand from the key and moved a pace or two into the room, so as to confront her rival at close quarters. "That's my affair! I fancy you will have to tell me a good deal more before you do see him."

"Why?"

"Oh, why?" mimicking her rudely. "Why? Because——"

"What are you to him?"

"What you were!" Bess answered.

Henrietta's face flamed anew. But the insult no longer found her unprepared. She saw that she was in the presence of a woman dangerous and reckless; and one who considered her a rival. On the hearth crouched and gibbered that fearful old man. The door was locked—the action had not been lost on her; and no living being, no one outside that door, knew that she was there.

"You are insolent!" was all she answered.

"But it is true!" Bess said. "Or, if it is not true——"

"It is not true!" with a glance of scorn. She knew even in her innocence that this girl had been more to him.

"Then why do you ask for him?" with derision. "What do you want with him? What right have you to ask for him?"

"I wish to see him," Henrietta answered. She would not, if she could avoid it, let her fears appear. After all, it was daylight, and she was strong and young; a match, she thought, for the other if the old man had not been there. "I wish to see him, that is all, and that is enough," she repeated, firmly.

Bess did not answer at once. Indeed, at this point there came over her a change; as if either the other's courage impressed her, or cooler thoughts suggested a different course of

action. Her eyes still brooded malevolently on the other's face, as if she would gladly have spoiled her beauty, and her sharp, white teeth gleamed. But to Henrietta's last words she did not answer. She seemed to be wavering, to be uncertain. And at last,

"Do you mean him fair?" she asked. "That is the question."

"I mean no harm to him."

"Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour."

"I'd tear you limb from limb, if you did!" Bess cried in the old tone of violence. And the look which accompanied the words matched them. But the next moment, "If I could believe you," she said more quietly, "it would be well and good. But——"

"You may believe me. Why should I do him harm?"

Bess bit her nails in doubt; and for the first time since her entrance she turned her eyes from her rival. Perhaps for this reason Henrietta's courage rose. She told herself that she had been foolish to feel fear a few minutes before: that she had allowed herself to be scared by a few rude words, such as women of this class used on the least provocation. And the temptation to drop the matter if she could escape uninjured gave place to a brave determination to do all that was possible. She resolved to be firm, yet prudent; and to persevere. And when the dialogue was resumed the tone on each side was more moderate.

"'Well," Bess said, with a grudging air, "perhaps you may not wish to do him harm. I don't know, my lass. But you may do it, all the same."

"How?"

"If you think he is here you are mistaken."

Henrietta had already come to this conclusion. "Still," she said, "I can go to him."

"I don't see how you are to go to him."

"I will go anywhere."

"Ay," with contempt. "And so will a many more at your heels."

"No one saw me come here," Henrietta said.

"No. But it will be odd if no one sees you leave here. I met Bishop as I came, and another with him, hot-foot after you, both, and raising the country as fast as they could."

Henrietta frowned. She gazed through the window. Then she looked again at Bess.

"Is he far from here?" she asked.

"That's telling, and I'm not going to tell. Far or near, I don't see how you are to go to him, unless——" She broke off, paused a moment, and then, as if she put away a thought that had occurred to her, "No," she said with decision, "I see no way. There is no way."

To Henrietta, the girl, the situation, the surroundings, and not least her own rôle, were odious. Merely to negotiate with such an one as this was a humiliation; but to endure her open scorn, to feel her cheeks burn under the fire of her taunts, was hateful. Yet failure in the enterprise from which she had let herself expect so much was still worse—still worse; and the prospect of it overcame her pride. She could not accept the defeat of all her hopes and expectations. She could not.

"You said 'unless,'" she retorted.

Bess laughed.

"Ay, but it's an 'unless,'" she answered contemptuously, "that you are not the one to fill up."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say," Bess answered impudently. And vaulting sideways on the table, she sat swinging her feet, and eyeing the other with a triumphant smile.

"Unless what?"

"Unless you like to stay here until it is dark,—ay, dark, my pretty peacock; and that won't be for an hour or more. Then you may go to him safely. Not before! But you fine ladies," with a look that took in Henrietta, from her high-piled hair and flushed face to the hem of her skirt, "are afraid of your shadows, I'm told."

"I am not afraid of my shadow," Henrietta answered.

"You're afraid of the dark, or why didn't you come when he asked you? And when you could have helped him?

Why did you not come then and say what you chose to him ? "

" I did come," Henrietta answered coldly. " It was he who failed to meet me."

" That's a nice flim-flam ! " Bess rejoined, with incredulity. " You're not one to venture yourself out after moonrise, I'll be bound. And so I told him ! But anyway," sliding to her feet, and speaking with decision, " he's not here, and you can't see him ! And to tell the truth, I'd as lief have your room as your company, that being so."

She turned to the door as if to open it. But Henrietta did not move. She was thinking. The sneering words, the dark handsome face, filled her with distrust ; nay, with something like loathing when she reflected that the man she sought had been this girl's lover. But they also roused her spirit. They spurred her to the step which the other dared her to take. Was she to show herself as timid a thing, as poor a creature as this gipsy girl deemed her ? She who had come hither with her heart set upon a prize ; was she to relinquish that prize because its pursuit demanded a common amount of courage —such courage as this village girl possessed and made naught of ?

And yet—and yet she hesitated. She was not afraid of the girl ; she was not afraid—she told herself—of the man who had once professed to be her lover : but there might be others and it would be dark. If the boy were there, there would be others. And she was not sure that she was—not afraid. For the old man by the fireside, with his squalid clothes and his horrible greed, made her flesh creep. She hesitated ; until Bess, with a sneer, bade her to go if she were going.

" I'd as soon see your back," she continued, " and ha' done with it. I know your sort ! All fine feathers and as much spunk as a mouse ! "

Henrietta made up her mind. She sat down on the nearest stool.

" I shall remain," she said, " and go with you to see him."

" Not you ! So what's the use of talking ? "

"I shall go," Henrietta replied firmly. "It will be dark an hour. I will remain and go with you."

Bess shrugged her shoulders and answered nothing. But ad Henrietta caught sight of her smile, she had certainly anged her mind.

Even without that, and unwarned, the girl found, as they t in silence, and the minutes passed and the light faded, uch ground for hesitation. The words which Clyne had used hen he forbade her to risk herself, the terms in which he had escribed the desperate plight of the men whom she must eard, the fears that had assailed her when she had gone after ark to meet a peril less serious—all these things recurred to er memory, and scared her. By pressing her lips together ne maintained a show of unconcern; but only because the usk hid her loss of colour. She repented—gravely; but she ad not the courage to draw back. She shrank from meeting —as she must meet, if she rose to go—the other's smile of riumph; she shrank from the sense of humiliation under which ne would smart after she had escaped. She had cast the die nd must dare. She must see the enterprise through. And she at on. But she was sure that she could hardly suffer worse han she suffered during those minutes, while her fate still lay n her hands, while the power to withdraw was still hers, and ndecision plucked at her. The man who fights with his back o the wall suffers less than when, before he drew his blade, magination dealt him a score of deaths.

The old man continued to grumble over the fire; and eldom, but sometimes, he laid his chin on his shoulder and ooked back at her. Bess, on the contrary, gazed at her as the cat at the mouse; but with her back to the light and her own face in shadow, so that whatever thoughts or passions clouded her eyes, they passed unseen. Presently, as the light ailed, Bess's head became no more than a dark knob breaking the lower line of dusty panes; while through the upper a patch of pale green sky, promising frost, held Henrietta's eyes and raised a still but solemn voice amid the tumult of her thoughts. That morsel of sky was the only clean, pure thing within sight, and it faded quickly, and became first grey and then a blur

of darkness. By that time the room, with its close, fetid odours and its hints at gruesome secrets, had sunk into the blackness of night.

The fire gave out a dull glow, but it went no farther than the hearth. Yet presently it was the cause of an illusion, if illusion it was, which gave Henrietta a shock. Turning her eyes from the window—it seemed to her that longer waiting would break her down—she saw the outline of the old miser's figure, but erect and much closer to her than before—and, unless she was mistaken, with hands outstretched as if to clutch her neck. She uttered a low cry, and rose, stepping back. On the instant he vanished. But whether he sank down, or retreated, or had never stirred, she could not be sure ; while her cry found its only echo in Bess's mischievous laughter.

" Ha ! ha ! You're not quite so bold ! " Bess cried, with enjoyment, " as you were an hour ago ! "

The jeer gave a fillip to Henrietta's pride.

" I am ready," she said, though her voice shook a little.

" And you'll go ? "

" Yes," coldly ; " I shall go."

" Did you think he was going to twist your pretty neck ? " Bess rejoined. " Was that it ? But come," in a more sober tone, " we'll go. Good-night, old man ! " And moving to the door with the ease of one who knew every foot of the room, she unlocked it. A breath of fresh, cold air, blowing on her cheek, informed Henrietta that the door was open. She groped her way to it.

" Do you wait here," Bess whispered, " while I see if the coast is clear. You'll hear an owl hoot ; then come."

But Henrietta was not going to be left with that old man. She crept outside the door, and holding it behind her, waited. The night was dark as well as cold, for the moon would not rise for some hours ; and Henrietta wondered, as she drew her hood about her face how they were to go anywhere. Presently the owl hooted low, and she released the door, and groped her way round the house and between the fir trunks to the gate. A hand, rough but small, clutched her wrist and turned her about ; a voice whispered, " Come ! " and the two, Bess acting

, guide, set off in silence along the road in the direction of troutbeck.

" How far is it ? " Henrietta muttered, when they had gone distance that in the night seemed a good half mile.

" That's telling," Bess answered. " 'Tain't far. Turn here! light ! right ! " pushing her. " Now wait while I——"

" What are you doing ? "

Bess did not explain that she was opening a gate. Instead ne impelled the other forward and squeezed her arm to im- ress on her the need of silence. Henrietta felt that the ground ver which they were passing was at once softer and more neven, and she guessed that they had left the road. A mo- nent later the air met her cheek more coldly, and the gloom eemed less opaque. She conjectured that she stood on the row of a hill—or a precipice—and involuntarily she recoiled. But Bess dragged her on, down a slope so steep that, although he girl trod with caution, she was scarcely able to keep her feet.

Feeling her still hang back, the gipsy girl plucked at her.

" Hurry ! " she whispered. " Hurry, can't you ? We are nearly there."

" Where ? "

" Why, there ! "

But the cold and the darkness and the other's hostile tone had shaken Henrietta's nerves. She jerked herself free.

" Where ? " she repeated firmly. " Where are we going ? shall not go farther unless you tell me."

" Nonsense ! "

" I shall not."

" Let be ! Let be ! "

" Tell me this minute ! "

" To Tyson the doctor's, if you must know," Bess replied grudgingly.

" Oh ! "

She knew now. She stood half way down the smooth side of the hollow in which Tyson's farm nestled. She remembered the large kitchen, with the shining oaken table and the woman with the pale plump face who had crouched on the settle and gone in fear of nights. And though the place still stood a trifle

uncanny in her memory, and the uncomfortable impression which the woman's complaints had made on her had not quite passed away, the knowledge relieved her.

She knew at least where she was, and that the place lay barely a furlong from the road. She might count, too, on the aid of the doctor's wife, who was jealous of this very girl. And after all, in comparison with the miser's wretched abode, Tyson's house, though lonely, seemed an everyday dwelling, and safe.

The news reassured her. And when Bess, in a tone of scorn that thinly masked disappointment, flung at her the words, "Then you are not coming?" she was ready.

"Yes, I am coming," she said. And she yielded herself again to the girl's guidance. In less than a minute they were at the bottom of the hollow. They skirted the fold-yard and the long, silent buildings that bulked somewhat blacker than the night. They turned a corner, and a dog not far from them stirred its chain and growled. But Bess stilled it by a word, and the two halted in the gloom, where a thin line of light escaped beneath a door.

CHAPTER XXX

BESS'S TRIUMPH

BESS knocked twice, and, stooping to the keyhole, repeated the owl's hoot. Presently a bar was drawn back, and after a brief interval, during which those within appeared to listen, the key was turned, and the door was opened far enough to admit one person at a time. The two slid in, Bess pushing Henrietta before her.

The moment she had passed the threshold Henrietta stood, dazzled by the light and bewildered by what she saw. Nor was it her eyes only that were unpleasantly affected. A voice, loud and blustering, hailed her appearance with a curse, fired from the heart of a cloud of tobacco smoke. And the air was heavy with the reek of spirits.

"By G—d!" the voice which had affrighted her repeated. "Who's this? Are you mad, girl?" And the speaker sprang to his feet. He was one of two thick-set, unshaven men who were engaged in playing cards on a corner of the table. His comrade kept his place, but stared, a jug half lifted to his lips, while a third man, the only other present, a loose-limbed, good-looking gipsy lad, who had opened the door, grinned at the unexpected vision—as if his stake in the matter were less, and his interest in feminine charms greater. But nowhere, though the kitchen was wastefully lighted, and her frightened eyes flew to every part of it, was the man whom she came to meet.

She turned quickly upon Bess, as if she thought that she might still escape. But the door was already closed, nay, bolted behind them, and the key turned. And before she could speak:

"Have done a minute!" Bess muttered, pushing her aside. "And let me deal with them." Then, advancing into the room—but not before she had seen the great bar also drawn across the door—"Shut your trap!" she cried to the man who had spoken. "And listen!"

"Who's this?"

"What's that to you?"

"Who is it, I say?" the man cried, even more violently. "And what the blazes have you brought her here for?" And he poured out a string of oaths that drove the blood from Henrietta's cheeks. "Who is it? Who is it?" he continued. "D'you think, you vixen, that because my neck is in a noose, I want some one to pull the rope tight?"

"What a fool you are to talk before her!" Bess answered, with quiet scorn. "If any one pulls the hemp it's you."

"Lord help you, I'll do more than talk!" the man rejoined. And he snatched up a heavy pistol that lay on the table beside the cards. "Quick, will you? Speak! Who is it, and why do you bring her?"

"I'll speak quick enough, but not here!" Bess answered contemptuously. "If you must jaw, come into the dairy! Come, don't think that I'm afraid of you!" And she turned to Henrietta, who, stricken dumb by the scene, recognised too late the trap into which she had fallen. "Do you stay here," she said, "unless you want his hand on you. Sit there!" pointing abruptly to the settle, "and keep mum until I come back."

But Henrietta's terror at the prospect of being abandoned by her guide, though that guide had betrayed her, was such that she seized Bess by the sleeve and held her back.

"Don't leave me!" she said. And again, with a shadow of the old imperiousness, "You are not to leave me! Do you hear? I will come with you. I——"

"You'll do what you're bid!" Bess answered. "Go and sit down!" And the savage glint in her eyes put a new fear into Henrietta.

She went to the settle, her limbs unsteady under her, her eyes glancing round for a chance of escape. Where was the woman of the house? Where was Tyson? Chiefest of all,

there was Walterson? She saw no sign of any of them. And terrified to the heart, she sat shivering where the other had ordered her to sit.

Bess opened a side door which led to the dairy, a cold, flagged room, lower by a couple of steps than the kitchen. She took up a candle, one of five or six which were flaring on the table, and she beckoned to the two men to follow her. When they had done so, the one who had taken up the pistol still muttering and casting suspicious glances over his shoulder, she slammed the door violently. But, either by accident, or with a view to intimidate her prisoner, she let it leap ajar again; so that much of the talk which followed reached Henrietta's ears, and quickly banished from the unhappy girl's cheeks the blood which the gipsy lad's stare of admiration had brought to them.

Lunt's first word was an oath. "You know well enough," he cried, "that we want no praters here! Why have you brought this fool here to peach on us?"

"Why?"

"Ay, why?" Lunt repeated. "In two days more we had all got clear, and nothing better managed!"

"And thanks to whom?" the girl retorted with energy. "Who has hidden you? Who has kept you? Who has done all for you? But there it is! Now my lad's gone, and Thistlewood's gone, you think all's yours! And as much of yourselves as masterless dogs!"

"Stow it!"

"But I'll not!" she retorted. "Whose house is this?"

"Well, my lass, not yours!" Giles, the less violent of the two, answered.

"Nor yours either! And, anyway, it's due to me that you are in it, and not outside, with irons on you."

"But cannot you see, lass," Giles answered, in a more moderate tone, "that you've upset all by bringing the wench here? You'll hear the morrow, or the morrow of that, that your lad's got clear to Leith, and Thistlewood with him! And then we go our way, and yon gipsy will carry off the brat in his long pack, and drop him the devil cares where—and

nobody'll be the wiser, and his father'll have a lesson that will do him good! But, now you've let the girl in, what'll you do with her when we get clear? You cannot stow her in the long pack, and the moment you let her go her tongue will clack!"

"How do you know it will clack?" Bess asked, in a tone that froze the listening girl's blood. "How do you know it will clack?" she repeated. "The lake's deep enough to hold both."

"But what's the game, lass?" Giles asked. "Show a glim. Let's see it. If you are so fond of us," in a tone of unpleasant meaning, "that you've brought her—just to amuse us in our leisure, say it out! Though even then I'm not for saying that the game is worth the candle! Since coves in our very particular case has to be careful, and the prettiest bit of red and white may hang a man as quick as her mother! But I don't think you had that in your mind, Bess."

"Well?"

"And that being so, and hemp so cheap, out with it! Show a glim, and you'll not find us nasty."

"The thing's pretty plain, isn't it?" Bess answered, coolly. "You've had your fun. Why shouldn't I have mine? You'd a grudge, and you've paid it. Why am I not to pay mine?"

"What has the wench done to you?"

"What's that to you?" viciously. "Stolen my lad, if you like. Anyway, it's my business. If I choose to treat her as you have treated the brat, what is it to you? If I've a mind to give her a taste of the smugglers' oven, what's that to you? Or if I choose to spoil her looks, or break her pride—she's one of those that teach us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters—and if I choose to give her a lesson, is it any business but mine? She's crossed me! She's a peacock! And if I choose to have some fun with her and hold her nose to the grindstone, what's that to you?"

"But afterwards?" Giles persisted. "Afterwards, my lass? What then?"

"Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies," Bess answered. "For the matter of that, if my old dad once gets his fingers round her throat she'll not squeak! You may swear to that."

They dropped their voices then, or they moved farther from the door. So that the remainder of the debate escaped Henrietta, though she strained her ears to the utmost.

She had heard enough, however; enough to know where she stood, and to feel the cold grip of despair close upon her. Fortunately she had had such preparation as the scene and the change in Bess's demeanour afforded; and while her heart thumped to choke her, and she could not restrain the glances that like a hunted hare she cast about her, she neither fainted nor raised an outcry. The gipsy lad, who lolled beside the door and never took his bold eyes from her, detected the sudden stillness of her pose and her changed aspect. But, though his gaze dwelt as freely as he pleased on her, on the turn of her pale cheek, and the curve of her figure, he was deceived into thinking that she did not catch the drift that was so clear to him.

"She's frightened!" he thought, smacking his lips. "She's frightened! But she'd be more frightened if she heard what they are saying. A devil, Bess is, a devil if there ever was one!" And he wondered whether, if he told the girl, she would cling to him, and pray to him, and kneel to him—to save her! He would like that, for she was a pretty prey; and the prettier in his eyes, because she was not dark-skinned and black-eyed, like his own women, but a thing of creamy fairness.

Henrietta heard all, however, and understood. And for a few moments she was near to swooning. Then the very peril in which she found herself steadied her, and gave her power to think. Was there any quarter to which she could look for help—outside or in? Outside the house, alas, none; for she had taken care, fatal care, to blind her trail, and to leave no trace by which her friends could find her! And inside, the hope was as slight. Walterson, to whose pity she might have appealed—with success, if all chivalry were not dead in him—was gone, it seemed. There remained only—a feeble straw indeed to which to cling—the woman of the house; the white-faced woman who had gone in fear, and thought this very girl Bess had designs on her life!

But was the woman there? She had been very near her

time, yet no cry, no whimper bore witness to the presence of child-life in the house. And the room in its wild and wasteful disorder gave the lie to the presence of any housewife, however careless. The flagged floor, long uncleaned and unwhitened, was strewn with broken pipe-stems, half-burned pipe-lights, gnawed bones and dirty platters. The bright oaken table, the pride of generations of thrifty wives, was a litter of dog's-eared cards and over-set bottles, broken loaves, and pewter dishes. One of the oat-cake springs hung loose, tearing the ceiling; in one corner a bacon-chest gaped open and empty. In another corner a pile of dubious bedding lay as its occupant had left it. The chimney-place was cumbered with logs of wood, and greasy frying-pans and half-cleaned pots lay everywhere; while on the whole, and on a medley of tattered things too repulsive to mention, a show of candles that would have scared the least frugal dame, cast a useless glare.

In a word, everything within sight proved that the house was at the mercy of the gang who surrounded her. And if that were so? If no help were possible? For an instant panic gripped her. The room swam round, and she had to grasp the settle with her hands to maintain her composure. What was she to do? What could she do, thus trapped? What? What?

She must think—for her own sake, and for the child's sake, who, it was clear, was also in their power. But it was hard, very hard, to think with that man's eyes gloating on her; and when with every second the door of the dairy, where they were conferring, might open, and—she knew not what horror might befall her. And—and then again there was the child!

For she spared it a thought of pity, grudgingly taken from her own need. And then the door opened. And Bess, carrying the light above her head, came up the steps, followed by the two men.

"We'll let her down soft!" she said, as she appeared. "We'll make her drudge first and smart afterwards! And she'll come to it the quicker."

"Nay, Bess," one of the men answered with a grin, "but you'll not spoil her pretty fingers."

"Oh, won't we?" Bess answered. And turning to

enrietta, and throwing off the mask, "Now, peacock!" she id, "I've got you here and you can't escape. I am going put your nose to the grindstone. I'm going to see if you e of the same stuff as other people! Can you cook?"

Henrietta did not know what to answer; nor whether she ured assert herself. She tried to frame the words, "Where Walterson? Where is Walterson? If he is not here, let e go!" But she knew that they would not let her go. nd, unable to speak, she stood dumb before them.

"Ah, well, we'll see if you can," Bess said, scoffingly. "I e you know what's what, and where you are. Come, slice at bacon! And fry it! There's the knife, and there's the tch, and let's have none of your airs or—you'll have the ife across your knuckles. Do you hear, cat? Do you nderstand? You'll do as you are bid here. We'll see how ou like to be undermost."

The men laughed.

"That's the way, Bess," one said. "Break her in, and e'll soon come to it!"

"Anyways, she'll not take my lad again!" Bess said, as enrietta, bending her head, took the knife with a shaking and. "We'll give her something to do, and she'll sleep the under for it when she goes to bed."

"Ay," said Giles, with a smile. "Hope she'll like her room!"

"She'll lump it or like it!" said Bess. "She's one of them at grinds our faces. We'll see how she likes to be ground!"

Involuntarily Henrietta, stooping with a white face to her ork, shuddered. But she had no choice. To beg for mercy as useless, it was clear; to resist was to precipitate matters, hile every postponement of the crisis offered a chance of escue. As long as insult was confined to words she must put p with it—how foolish, how foolish she had been to come! he must smile—though it were awry—and play the sullen the cheerful, as promised best. The door was locked on er. She had no friends within reach. Help there was none. he was wholly at the mercy of these wretches, and her only ope was that, if she did their bidding, she might awaken a park of pity in the breast of one or other of them.

Still, she did not quite lose her presence of mind. As she bent over her task, and with shaking fingers hacked at the tough rind of the bacon, the while Bess rained on her a shower of gibes and the men grinned at the joke, her senses were on the alert. Once she fancied a movement and a smothered cry in the room above; and she had work to keep her eyes lowered when Bess immediately went out. She might have thought more of the matter; but left alone with the three men she had her terrors. She dared not let her mind or her eyes wander. To go on with the task, and give the men not so much as a look, seemed the only course.

For the present the three limited their coarse gallantries to words. Nay, when the gipsy lad would have crept nearer to her, the others bade him have done; adding, that kissing the cook-maid never cleaned a dish.

Then Bess came back and forced her to hold the pan on the fire, though the heat scorched her cheeks.

"We've to do it! See how you like it!" the girl cried, standing over her vindictively. "And see you don't drop it, my lass, or I'll lay the pan to your cheek. You're proud of your pink and white"—thrusting her almost into the fire—"see how it will stand a bit of cook-maid's work!"

Pride helped Henrietta to restrain the rising sob, the complaint. And luckily it needed but another minute to complete the cooking. Bess and the three men sat down to the table, and Bess's first humour was to make her wait on them. But a moment later she changed her mind, forced the girl to sit down, and, will she, nill she, Henrietta had to swallow, though every morsel seemed to choke her, the portion set for her.

"Down with it!" Bess cried, spitefully. "What's good enough for us is good enough for you! And when supper's done I'll see you to your bedroom. You're a mile too dainty, like all your sort! Ah, you'd like to kill me this minute, wouldn't you? That's what I like! I've often thought I should like to have one of you peacocks—who look at me as if I were dirt—and put my foot upon her face! And now I've got you—who stole my lad! And you'll see what I'll do to you!"

CHAPTER XXXI

A STRANGE BEDROOM

THE men followed Bess's lead, and as they supped never ceased to make Henrietta the butt of odious jests and more odious gallantries ; until, now pale, now red, the girl was eager to welcome any issue from a position so hateful. Once, stung beyond reason, she sprang up and would have fled from them, with burning ears. But Bess seized her by the shoulders and thrust her back violently into her seat ; and, sobered by the force used to her, and terrified lest the men should lay their hands on her, she resigned herself.

Strangely, the one of the four who said nothing, was the one whom she feared the most. The gipsy lad did not speak. But his eyes never left her, and something in their insolent freedom caused her more misery than the others' coarsest jests. He marked her blushes and pallor, and her one uncontrollable revolt ; and like the bird that flutters under the spell of the serpent which hopes to devour it, she was conscious of this watching. She was conscious of it to such an extent, that when Bess cried, " Now it's time you had your bedroom candlestick, peacock ! " she did not hear, but sat on as one deaf and blind ; as the hare sits fascinated by the snake's eye.

The gipsy smiled. He understood. But Bess did not, and she tugged the girl's hair with sufficient roughness to break the spell.

" Up ! " she cried. " Up when I speak ! Don't dream you're a fine lady any longer ! Wait till I get your bed candlestick—eh, lads ?—and you'll be wiser to-morrow, and tamer, too. See, my lass, that's for you ! " And she held up a small dark-lanthorn, and opening it, kindled the wick from

one of the candles. "Now come! And do you—no, not you!" to the gipsy, who had stepped forward—"you!" to Giles, "come with me and see her safely into her bedroom!"

Lunt growled a word or two.

"Stow it!" Bess answered, as she darkened the lanthorn. "It's to be as I say. Here, give me your wrist, girl."

But at that, fear gripped Henrietta. She hung back with a white face.

"What are you going to do with me?" she cried. "What are you——"

"In two minutes you'll see!" Bess retorted. And with a quick movement she grasped the girl's arm. "And be as wise as I am. Lay hold of her other arm," she continued to Giles. "It's no use to struggle, my lady!—and if she cries out, down her at once. You hear, do you?" she continued, addressing Henrietta, who with terror found herself as helpless as a doe in the hounds' fangs. "Then mum, and it'll be the better for you. Here, do you take the lanthorn," she went on, handing it to Giles, "and I'll carry the victuals. You can hold her?"

"I'll break her wrist if she budges," the man replied. "But, after all, isn't she as well here?"

"No, she's not!" Bess answered, with decision. "Do you"—to Lunt—"open the yard door for us, and stand by till we come in again. No, not you," to the gipsy, who had again stepped forward. "You're too ready, my lad, and I don't trust you."

Fortunately for Henrietta, the sight of the plate of food relieved her of her worst fears. She was not to be done to death, but in all probability to be consigned to the hiding-place which held the boy. And though the prospect was not cheerful, and Bess's manner was cruel and menacing, Henrietta felt that if this were the worst she could face it. She could bear what the child bore, and by sharing its hardships she might do something to comfort it. Always, too, there was the chance of escape; and from the place, be it outhouse or stable, in which they held the boy confined, escape must be more feasible than from the house, with its bolts and bars.

She had time to make these calculations between the kitchen and the yard door; through which they half-led, half-pushed her into the night. With all a woman's natural timidity on finding herself held and helpless in the dark, she had to put restraint upon herself not to try to break loose, not to scream. But she conquered herself, and let them lead her, unresisting and as one blindfold, where they pleased.

It was clear that they knew the place well. For, though the darkness in the depths of this bowl in the earth was absolute, they did not unmask the lanthorn; but moved confidently for a distance of some fifty yards. The dog, kenneled near, had given tongue as they left the house. But once only. And when they paused, all was so still in the frosty mist that wrapped them about and clutched the throat, that Henrietta's ear caught the trickle of water near at hand.

"Where are we?" she muttered. "Where are we?" She hung back in sudden, uncontrollable alarm.

"Mum, fool!" Bess hissed in her ear. "Be still, or it will be the worse with you. Have you," she continued, in the same low tone, "undone the door, lad?"

For answer a wooden door groaned on its hinges.

"Right!" Bess murmured. "Bend your head, girl!"

Henrietta obeyed, and pushed forward by an unseen hand, she advanced three paces, and felt a warmer air salute her cheek. The door groaned again; she heard a wooden bolt thrust home. Bess let her hand go and unmasked the lanthorn.

Henrietta shivered. She was in a covered well-head, whence the water, after filling a sunken caldron, about which the moss hung in dark, snaky wreaths, escaped under the wooden door. Some yeoman of bygone days had come to the help of nature, and after enlarging a natural cavity had enclosed it, to protect the water from pollution. The place was so small that it no more than held the three who stood in it, nor all of them dry-shod. And Henrietta's heart sank indeed before the possibility of being left to pass the night in this dank cave.

Bess's next movement freed her from that fear. The girl turned the light on the rough wall, and seizing an innocent-looking wooden peg, which projected from it, pushed the

implement upwards. A piece of the wall, of the shape and size of a large oven door, fell downwards and outwards, as the tail of a cart falls. It revealed a second cavity of which the floor stood a couple of feet higher than the ground on which they were. It was very like a spacious bread-oven, though something higher and longer ; apparently it had been made in the likeness of one.

But Henrietta did not think of this, or of its shape or its purpose. For the same light, a dim, smoky lamp burning at the far end of the place, which revealed its general aspect, disclosed a bundle of straw and a forlorn little form.

She gasped. That any human creature, much more a child, should be confined in such a place, buried in the bowels of the earth, seemed so monstrous, so shocking, that she could not believe it !

" Oh ! " she cried, forgetting for the moment her own position and her own fate, forgetting everything in her pity. " You have not left the child here ! And alone ! For shame ! For shame ! " she continued, turning on them in the heat of her indignation and fearing them no more than a hunter fears a harmless snake—which excites disgust, but not terror. " What do you think will happen to you ? "

For a moment, strange to say, her indignation cowed them. For a moment they saw the thing as she saw it ; they were daunted. Then Bess sneered,

" You don't like the place ? "

" For that child ? "

" For yourself ? "

She was burning with indignation, and for answer she climbed into the place, and went on her hands and knees to the child's side. She bent over it, and listened to its breathing.

" Is't asleep ? " Bess asked. There was a ring of anxiety in her tone. And when Henrietta did not answer, " It's not dead ? " she muttered.

" Dead ? No," Henrietta replied, with a shudder. " But it's—it's——"

" What ? "

" It breathes, but—but——" She drew its head on to her

shoulder and peered more closely into the small white face. "It breathes, but—but what is the matter with it? What have you done to it?"—glancing at them suspiciously. For the boy, after returning her look with lack-lustre eyes, had averted his face from the light and from hers.

"It's had a dose," Bess answered roughly—she had had her moment of alarm. "In an hour or two it will awake. Then you can feed it. Here's the porridge. And there's milk. It was fresh this morning and must be fresh enough now. Hang the brat, I'm sure it has been trouble enough! Now you can nurse it, my lass, and I wish you joy of it, and a gay good night! And before morning you'll know what it costs to rob Bess Hinkson of her lad!"

"But the child will die!" Henrietta cried, rising to her feet—she could stand in the place, but not quite erect. "Stay! Stay! At least take the child——"

"What?"

"Take the child in! And warm and feed it! Oh, I beg you take it!" Henrietta pleaded. "It will die here! It is cold now! I believe it is dying now!"

"Dying, your grand-dam!" the girl retorted, scornfully. "But if we take it, will you stay?"

"I will!" Henrietta answered. "I will!"

"So you will! And the child too!" Bess retorted. And she slammed-to the door. But again, while Henrietta, appalled by her position, still stared at the place, the shutter fell, and Bess thrust in her dark, handsome face. "See here!" she said. "If you begin to scream and shout, it will be the worse for you, and do you remember that! I shall not come, but I shall send Saul. He's took a fancy to you, and will find a way of silencing you, I'll bet!" with an unpleasant smile. "So now you know! And if you want his company you'll shout!"

She slammed the shutter to again with that, and Henrietta heard the bolt fall into its place.

The girl stood for a moment, staring and benumbed. But by and by her eyes, which at first had travelled wildly round, grew more sober. They fell on her tiny fellow-prisoner, and

resting on that white, unconscious cheek, on those baby hands clenched in some bygone paroxysm, they filled slowly with tears.

"I will think of the child! I will think of the child!" she murmured. And, crouching down, she hugged it to her with a sensation of relief, almost of happiness. "I thank God I came! I thank God I am here to protect it!"

And resolutely averting her eyes from the low roof and oven-like walls, that, when she dwelt too long on them, seemed, like the famous dungeon of Poe, to contract about her and choke her, she devoted herself to the child; and as she grew scared by its prolonged torpor, she strove to rouse it. At first her efforts were vain. But she persisted in them. For the vision which she had had in the cell at Kendal—of the child holding out pleading hands to her—rose to her memory. She was certain that at that moment the child had been crying for aid. And surely not for nothing, not without purpose, had the cry come to her ears who now by so strange a fate found herself at the boy's side.

At intervals she felt almost happy in this assurance; as she pressed the child to her, and watched by the dim, yellow light its slow recovery from the drug. Her present danger, her present straits, her position in this underground place, which would have sent some mad, were forgotten. And the past and the future filled her thoughts; and Anthony Clyne. Phrases of condemnation and contempt which *he* had used to her recurred, as she nursed his child; and she rejoiced to think that he must unsay them! The bruises which he had inflicted still discoloured her wrist, and moved strange feelings in her, when her eyes fell upon them. But he would repent of his violence! Very soon, very soon, and how completely! The thought was sweet to her!

She was in peril, and a week before she had been free as air. But then she had been without any prospect of reinstatement, any hope of regaining the world's respect, any chance of wiping out the consequences of her mad and foolish act. Now, if she lived, and escaped from this strait, he at least must thank her, he at least must respect her. And she was sure, yes, she dared

to tell herself, that if he respected her, he would know how to make the world also respect her.

But then again she trembled. For there was a darker side. She was in the power of these wretches; and the worst—the thought paled her cheek—might happen! She held the child more closely to her, and rocked it to and fro in earnest prayer. The worst! Yes, the worst might happen. But then anew she fell back on the reflection that *he* was searching for them, and if any could find them he would. He was searching for them, she was sure, as strenuously, and perhaps with more vengeful purpose, than when he had sought the child alone! By this time, doubtless, she was missed, and he had raised the country, flung wide the alarm, set a score moving, fired the Dalesmen from Bowness to Ambleside. Yes, for certain they were searching for her. And they must know, careful as she had been to hide her trail, that she could not have travelled far; and the scope of the search, therefore, would be narrow, and the scrutiny close. They could hardly fail, she thought, to visit the farm in the hollow; its sequestered and lonely position must invite inquiry. And if they entered, a single glance at the disordered kitchen would inform the searchers that something was amiss.

So far Henrietta's thoughts, as she clasped the boy to her, and strove to warm him to life against her own body, ran in a current chequered but more or less hopeful. But again the supposition would force itself upon her—the men were desperate, and the woman was moved by a strange hatred of her. What if they fled, and left no sign? What if they escaped, and left no word of her? The thought was torture! She could not endure it. She put the child down, and rising to her knees, she covered her eyes with her hands. To be buried underground! To die of hunger and thirst in this bricked vault, as far from hope and help, from the voices and eyes of men and the blessed light of the sun, as if they had laid her alive in her coffin!

Oh, it was horrible! She could not bear it; she could not bear to think of it. She sprang, forgetting herself, to her feet, and the blow which the roof dealt her, though her thick hair

saved her from injury, intensified the feeling. She was buried! Yes, she was buried alive! The roof seemed to be sinking upon her. These brick walls so cunningly arched, and narrowing at either end, as the ends of a coffin narrow, were the walls of her tomb! Those faint lines of mortar which seclusion from the elements had preserved in their freshness, presently she would attack them with her nails in the frenzy of her despair. She glared about her. The weight, the mass of the hill above, seemed to press upon her. The air seemed to fail her. Was there no way, no way of escape from this living tomb—this grave under the tons and tons and tons of rock and earth?

And then the child—perhaps she had put him from her roughly, and the movement had roused him—whimpered. And she shook herself free—thank God—free from the hideous dream that had obsessed her. She remembered that the men were not yet fled, nor was she abandoned. She was leaping, thank Heaven, far above the facts. In a passion of relief she knelt beside the child, and rained kisses on him, and swore to him, as he panted with terror in her arms, that he need not fear, that he was safe now, that she was beside him to take care of him! And that all would be well if he would not cry. All would be well. For she bethought herself that the child must not know how things stood. Fear and suffering he might know if the worst came; but not the fear, not the mental torture which she had known for a few moments, and which in so short a time had driven her almost beside herself.

The boy's faculties were still benumbed by the hardships which he had undergone; perhaps a little by the narcotic he had taken. And though he had seen Henrietta at least a dozen times in the old life, he could not remember her. Nevertheless she contrived to satisfy him that she was a friend, that she meant him well, that she would protect him. And little by little, in spite of the surroundings which drew the child's eyes again and again in terror to the dimly-lit vaulting, on which the shadow of the girl's figure bulked large, his alarm subsided. His heart beat less painfully, and his eyes lost in a degree the strained and pitiful look which had become habitual. But his little limbs still started if the light flickered, or the oil sput-

cered ; and it was long before, partly by gentle suasion, partly by caresses, she succeeded in inducing the child—nauseated as he was by the drug—to take food. That done, though she still bent over him anxiously, knowing him to be dreadfully weak, she was better satisfied. And soon, soothed by her firm embrace and confident words, her charge fell into a fitful and troubled sleep

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SEARCH

TO return to Bishop and his difficulties. Thrown off the trail in the wood, he pushed along the road as far as Windermere village. There, however, he could hear nothing. No one of Henrietta's figure and appearance had been seen in the neighbourhood. And in the worst of humours, with the world as well as with himself, he put about and returned to the inn. If the girl had hied her home during his absence, it was bad enough; he had had his trouble for nothing, and might have spared his shoe-leather. Hang such pretty frailties for him! But if, on the other hand, she had not come back, the case was worse. He had been left to watch her, he had lost her, and the blame would fall on him. Nadin would say more than he had said already about London officers and their uselessness. And if anything happened to her! Bishop wiped his brow as he thought of that, and of his next meeting with Captain Clyne. It was to be hoped, be devoutly hoped, that nothing had happened to the jade.

It wanted but half an hour of sunset, when he arrived, fagged and fuming, at the inn; and if his worst fears were not realised, he soon had ground to dread that they might be. Miss Damer had not returned.

"I've no truck with them rubbishy radicals," Mrs. Gilson added impersonally, scratching her nose with the handle of a spoon—a sign that she was ill at ease. "But they're right enough in one thing, and that is, that there's a lot of useless folk paid by the country—that'd never get paid by any one else! And for brains, give me a calf's head!"

Bishop evaded the conflict with what dignity he might.

"The Captain's not come in?" he asked.

"Yes, he's come in," the landlady answered.

"Well," sullenly, "the sooner I see him the better, then!"

"You can't see him now," Mrs. Gilson replied, with a glance at the clock. "He's sleeping."

Bishop stared.

"Sleeping?" he cried. "And the young lady not come back?"

"He don't know that she has so much as gone out," Mrs. Gilson answered with the utmost coolness. "And what's more, I'm not going to tell him. He came in looking not fit to cross a room, my man, let alone cross a horse! And when I went to take him a dish of tea I found him asleep in his chair. And you may take it from me, if he's not left to have out his sleep, now it's come, he'll be no more use to you, six hours from this, than a corpse!"

"Still, ma'am," Bishop objected, "the Captain won't be best pleased——"

"Please a flatiron!" Mrs. Gilson retorted. "Best served's best pleased, my lad, and that you'll learn some day." And then, suddenly taking the offensive, "For the matter of that, what do you want with him?" she continued. "Ain't you grown men? If Joe Nadin and you and half a dozen red-breasts can't find one silly girl in an open countryside, don't talk to me of your gangs! And your felonies! And the fine things you do in London!"

"But in London——"

"Ay, London Bridge was made for fools to go under!" Mrs. Gilson answered, with meaning. "It don't stand for nothing."

Bishop tapped his top-boot gloomily.

"She may come in any minute," he said. "There's that."

"She may, or she mayn't," Mrs. Gilson replied, with another look at the clock.

"She's not been gone more than an hour and a half."

"Nor the mouse my cat caught this afternoon," the landlady retorted. "But you'll not find it easily, my lad, nor know it when you find it."

He had no reply to make to that, but he carried his eye again to the clock. He was very uncomfortable—very uncomfort-

able. And yet he hardly knew what to do or where to look. In the meantime the girl's disappearance was becoming known, and caused, indoors and out, a thrill of excitement. Another abduction, another disappearance! And at their doors, on their thresholds, under their noses! Some heard the report with indignation, and abused the constables; and two in the house heard it with remorse; many with pity. But in the breasts of most the feeling was not wholly painful. The new mystery revived and doubled the old; and blew to a white heat the embers of interest which were beginning to grow cold. In the teeth of the nipping air—and sunset is often the coldest hour of the twenty-four—groups gathered in the yard and before the house. And while a man here and there winked at his neighbour and hinted that the young madam had slunk back to the lover from whom she had been parted, the common view was that mischief was afoot and that something strong should be done.

Meanwhile uncertainty—and in a small degree the absence of Captain Clyne and Nadin—paralysed action. At five, Bishop sent out three or four of his dependants; one to watch the boat-landing, one to keep an eye on the entrance to Troutbeck village, and others to bid the constables at Ambleside and Bowness to be on the watch. But as long as the young lady's return seemed possible—and some still thought the whole a storm in a tea-cup—men not unnaturally shrank from taking the lead. Nor until the man who took all the blame to himself interposed, was any real step taken.

It was nearly six when Bishop, talking with his friends in the passage, found himself confronted by the chaplain. Mr. Sutton was in a state of great and evident agitation. There were red spots on his cheek-bones, his pinched features were bedewed with perspiration, his eyes were bright. And he who usually shunned encounter with coarser wits, now singled out the officer in the midst of his fellows.

"Are you going to do nothing," he cried, "except drink?"

Bishop stared.

"See here, Mr. Sutton," he said, slowly and with dignity, "you must not forget——"

"Except drink?" the chaplain repeated, without compromise. And taking Bishop's glass, which stood half-filled on the window-seat beside him, he flung its contents through the doorway. "Do your duty, sir!" he continued firmly. "Do your duty! You were here to see that the lady did not leave the house alone. And you permitted her to go."

"And what part," Bishop answered with a sneer, "did your reverence play, if you please?" He was a sober man for those times, and the taunt was not a fair one.

"A poor part," the chaplain answered. "A mean one. But now—I ask only to act. Say what I shall do, and if it be only by my example I may effect something."

"Ay, you may!" Bishop returned. "And I'll find work for your reverence fast enough. Do you go and tell Captain Clyne the lady's gone. It's a task I've no stomach for myself," with a grin; "and your reverence is the very man for it."

Mr. Sutton winced.

"I will do even that," he said, "if you will no longer lose time."

"But she may return any minute."

"She will not!" Mr. Sutton retorted, with anger. "She will not! God forgive us for letting her go! If I failed in my duty, sir, do you do yours! Do you do yours!"

And such power does enthusiasm give a man, that he who these many days had seemed to the inn a poor timid creature, slinking in and out as privately as possible, now shamed all and kindled all.

"By jingo, I will, your reverence!" Bishop cried, catching the flame. "I will!" he repeated heartily. And he turned about and began to give orders with energy.

Fortunately Nadin arrived at that moment; and with his burly form and broad Lancashire accent, he seemed to bring with him the vigour of ten. In three minutes he apprehended the facts, pooh-poohed the notion that the girl would return, and with a good round oath "dommed them Jacobins," to give his accent for once, "for the graidliest roogs and the roofest devils i' all Lancashire—and that's saying mooch! But we mun ha' them hanged now," he continued, striding to

and fro in his long, rough horseman's coat. "We mun ha' them hanged! We'll larn them!"

He formed parties and assigned roads and brought all into order. The first necessity was to visit every house within a mile of the inn on the Windermere side; and this was taken in hand at once. In ten minutes the road twinkled with lights, and the frosty ground rang under the tread of ironshod boots. It was ascertained that no boat had crossed the lake that afternoon; and this so far narrowed the area to be searched, that the men were in a high state of excitement, and those who carried fire-arms looked closely to their priming.

"'Tis a pity it's neet!" said Nadin. "But we mun ha' them, we mun ha' them, afoor long!"

Meanwhile, Mr. Sutton had braced himself to the task which he had undertaken. Challenged by Bishop, he had been anxious to go at once to Clyne's room and tell him; that the Captain might go with the searchers if he pleased. But he had not mounted three steps before Mrs. Gilson was at his heels, bidding him, in her most peremptory manner, to "let his honour be for another hour. What can he do?" she urged. "He's but one more, and now the lads are roused, they'll do all he can do! Let him be, let him be, man," she continued. "Or if you must, watch him till he wakes, and then tell him."

"It will be worse then," the chaplain said.

"But he'll be better!" she retorted. "Do you be bidden by me. The man wasn't fit to carry his meat to his mouth when he went upstairs. But let him be until he has had his sleep out and he'll be another man."

And Mr. Sutton let himself be bidden. But he was right. Every minute which passed made the task before him more difficult. When at last Captain Clyne awoke, a few minutes after eight o'clock, and startled, brought his scattered senses to a focus, he saw sitting opposite him a man who hid his face in his hands, and shivered.

Clyne rose.

"Man, man!" he said. "What is it? Have you bad news?"

But the chaplain could not speak. He could only shake his head.

"They have not—not found——"

Clyne could not finish the sentence. He turned away, and with a trembling hand snuffed a candle—that his face might be hidden.

The chaplain shook his head.

"No, no!" he said. "No!"

"But it is—it's bad news?"

"Yes. She's—she's gone! She's disappeared also!"

Clyne dropped the snuffers on the table.

"Gone?" he muttered. "Who? Miss Damer?"

"Yes. She left the house this afternoon, and has not returned. It was my fault! My fault!" poor Mr. Sutton continued, in a tone of the deepest abasement. And with his face hidden he bowed himself to and fro like a man in pain. They asked me to follow her, and I would not! I would not—out of pride!"

"And she has not returned?" Clyne asked, in an odd tone.

"She has not returned—God forgive me!"

Clyne stared at the flame of the nearest candle. But he saw, not the flame, but Henrietta; as he had seen her the morning he turned his back on her, and left her standing alone on the road above the lake. Her slender figure under the falling autumn leaves rose before him; and he knew that he would never forgive himself. By some twist of the mind her fate seemed the direct outcome of that moment, of that desertion, of that cruel, that heartless abandonment. The after-events, save so far as they proved her more sinned against than sinning, vanished. He had been her sole dependence, her one protector, the only being to whom she could turn. And he had abandoned her heartlessly; and this—this unknown and dreadful fate—was the result. Her face rose before him, now smiling and defiant, now pale and drawn; and the piled-up glory of her hair. And he remembered—too late, alas, too late—that she had been of his blood and kin; and that he had first neglected her, and later when his mistake bred its natural result in her act of folly, he had deserted and punished her.

Remorse is the very shirt of Nessus. It is of all mental pains the worst. It seizes upon the whole mind; it shuts out every

prospect. It cries into the ear with every slow tick of the clock, the truth that that which had once been so easy can never be done now! That reparation, that kind word, that act of care, of thoughtfulness, of pardon—never, never now! And once so easy! So easy!

For he knew now that he had loved the girl; and that he had thrown away that which might have been the happiness of his life. He knew now that only pride had blinded him, giving the name of pity to that which was love—or so near to love that it was impossible to say where one ended and the other began. He thought of her courage and her pride; and then of the womanliness that, responding to the first touch of gentleness on his side, had wept for his child. And how he had wronged her from the first days of slighting courtship! how he had misunderstood her, and then mistrusted and maligned her—he, the only one to whom she could turn for help, or whom she could trust in a land of strangers—until it had come to this! It had come to this.

Oh, his poor girl! His poor girl!

A groan, bitter and irrepressible, broke from him. The man stood stripped of the trappings of prejudice; he saw himself as he was, and the girl as she was, a creature of youth and spirit and impulse. And he was ashamed to the depths of his soul.

At last, "What time did she go out?" he muttered.

The chaplain roused himself with a shiver and told him.

"Then she has been missing five hours?" There was a sudden hardening in his tone. "You have done something, I suppose? Tell me, man, that you have done something!"

The chaplain told him what was being done. And the mere statement gave comfort. Hearing that Mrs. Gilson had been the last to speak to her, Clyne said he would see the landlady. And the two went out of the room.

In the passage a figure rose before them and fled with a kind of bleating cry. It was Modest Ann, who had been sitting in the dark with her apron over her head. She was gone before they were sure who it was. And they thought nothing of the incident, if they noticed it.

Downstairs they found no news and no comfort; but much

oming and going. For presently the first party returned from s quest, and finding that nothing had been discovered, set orth again in a new direction. And by-and-by another re- urned, and standing ate something, and went out again, einforced by Clyne himself. And so began a night of which ne memory endured in the inn for a generation. Few slept, nd those in chairs, ready to start up at the first alarm. The ap ran free for all ; and in the coffee-room the table was set nd set again. The Sunday's joints—for the next day was unday—were cooked and cold, and half-eaten before the morning broke ; and before breakfast the larder of the Saluta- on at Ambleside was laid under contribution. At intervals, hose who dozed were aware of Nadin's tall, bulky presence as e entered shaking the rime from his long horseman's coat and alling for brandy ; or of Bishop, who went and came all night, ut in a frame of mind so humble and downcast that men carcely knew him. And now and again a fresh band of earchers tramped in one behind the other, passed the news y a single shake of the head, and crowding to the table ate nd drank before they turned to again—to visit a more distant, nd yet a more distant part.

Even from the mind of the father, the boy's loss seemed artly effaced by this later calamity. The mystery was so uch the deeper : the riddle the more perplexing. The girl ad gone out on foot in the full light of a clear afternoon ; and ithin a few hundred yards of the place to which they had raced the boy, she had vanished as if she had never been. Clyne knew from her own lips that Walterson was somewhere ithin reach. But this did not help much, since no one could hit on the place. And various were the suggestions, and many nd strange the solutions proposed. Every poacher and every ne'er-do-well was visited and examined, every house was can- assed, every man who had ever said aught that could be held o savour of radical doctrine, was considered. As the search pread to a wider and yet wider area, the alarm went with it, nd new helpers arrived, men on horseback and men on foot. And all through the long winter's night the house hummed ; nd the lights of the inn shone on the water as brightly and

persistently as the stars that in the solemn firmament wheeled and marched.

But lamps and stars were alike extinguished, and the late dawn was filtering through the casements on jaded faces and pale looks, when the first gleam of enlightenment showed itself. Clyne had been out for some hours, and on his return had paused at the door of the snuggery to swallow the cup of hot coffee which the landlady pressed upon him. Nadin was still out, but Bishop was there and the chaplain, and two or three yeomen and peasants. In all hearts hope had by this time given way to dejection; and dejection was fast yielding to despair. The party stood, here and there, for the most part silent; or dropped now and again a despondent word.

Suddenly Modest Ann appeared among them, with her head shrouded in her apron. And, "I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" the woman cried hysterically. "I must speak!"

A thrill of amazement ran through the group. They straightened themselves.

"If you know anything, speak by all means!" Clyne said, for surprise tied Mrs. Gilson's tongue. "Do you know where the lady is?"

"No! no!"

"Did she tell you anything?"

"Nothing! nothing!" the woman answered, sobbing wildly, and still holding the apron drawn tightly over her face. "Missus, don't kill me! She told me naught! Naught! But——"

"Well—what? What?"

"There was a letter I gave her some time ago—before—oh, dear!—before the rumpus was, and she was sent to Kendal! And I'm thinking," sob, sob, "you'd maybe know something from the person who gave it me."

"That's it," said Bishop coolly. "You're a sensible woman. Who was it?"

"That girl—of Hinkson's," she sobbed.

"Bess Hinkson!" Mrs. Gilson ejaculated.

"Ay, sure! Oh, dear! oh, dear! Bess said that she had it from a man on the road."

"And that may be so, or it may not," Bishop answered, with quiet dryness. He was in his element again. And then in a lower tone, "We're on it now," he muttered, "or I am mistaken. I've seen the young lady near Hinkson's once or twice. And it was near there I lost her. The house has been visited, of course; it was one of the first to be visited. But we'd no suspicion then, and now we have. Which makes a difference."

"You're going there?"

"Straight, sir, without the loss of a minute!"

Clyne's eyes sparkled. And tired as they were, the men answered to the call. Ten minutes before, they had crawled in, the picture of fatigue. Now, as they climbed the pastures above the inn, and plunged into the little wood in which Henrietta had baffled Bishop, they clutched their cudgels with as much energy as if the chase were but opening. It mattered not that some wore the high-collared coats of the day, and two waistcoats under them, and had watches in their fobs; and that others tramped in smock frocks drawn over their fustian shorts. The same indignation armed all, great and small, rich and poor; and in a wonderfully short space of time they were at the gate of Starvecrow Farm.

The house that, viewed at its best, had so bald and melancholy an aspect, wore a villainous look now—perched up there in bare, lowering ugliness, with its blind gable squinting through the ragged fir-trees.

Bishop left a man in the road, and sent two to the rear of the crazy, ruinous outbuildings which clung to the slope. With Clyne and the other three he passed round the corner of the house, stepped to the door and knocked. The sun's first rays were striking the higher hills, westward of the lake, as the party, with stern faces, awaited the answer. But the lake, with its holms, and the valley and all the lower spurs, lay grey and still and dreary in the grip of cold. The note of melancholy went to the heart of one as he looked, and filled it with remorse.

"Too late," it seemed to say, "too late!"

For a time no one came. And Bishop knocked again, and more imperatively; first sending a man to the lower end of the

ragged garden to be on the look-out. He knocked a third time. At last a shuffling of feet was heard approaching the door, and a moment later old Hinkson opened it. He looked, as he stood blinking in the daylight, more frowsy and unkempt and to be avoided than usual. But—they noted with disappointment that the door was neither locked nor bolted ; so that, had they thought of it, they might have entered at will !

" What is't ? " he drawled, peering at them. " Why did you na' come in ? "

Bishop pushed in without a word. The others followed. A glance sufficed to discover all that the kitchen contained ; and Bishop, deaf to the old man's remonstrances, led the way straight up the dark, close staircase. But though they explored without ceremony all the rooms above, and knocked, and called, and sounded, and listened, they stumbled down again, baffled.

" Where's your daughter ? " Bishop asked sternly.

" She was here ten minutes agone," the old man answered. Perhaps because the day was young he showed rather more sense than usual. But his eyes were full of spite.

" Here, was she ? "

" Ay."

" And where's she now ? "

" She's gone to t' doctor's. She be nursing there. They've no lass."

" Nursing ! Who's she nursing ? " incredulously.

The old man grinned at the ignorance of the question.

" The wumman and the babby," he said.

" At Tyson's ? "

" Ay, ay."

" The house in the hollow ? "

" That be it."

While they were talking thus, others had searched the crazy outhouses, but to no better purpose. And presently they all assembled in the road outside the gate.

" Where's your dog, old lad ? " asked one of the dalesmen.

The miser had shuffled after them, holding out his hand and begging of them.

"At the doctor's," he answered. "Her be fearsome and egged it. Ye'll give an old man something?" he added, whining. "Ye'll give something?"

"Off! Off you go, my lad!" Bishop cried. "We've done with you. If you're not a rascal, 'tis hard on you, for you look one!" And when the old skinflint had crawled back under the fir-trees, "Worst is, sir," he continued, with a grave face, "it's all true. Tyson's away in the north—with a brother or something of that kind—so I hear. And his missus had a baby this ten days gone or more. He's a rough tyke, but he's above this sort of thing, I take it. Still, we'll go and question the girl. We may get something from her."

And they trooped off along the road in twos and threes, and turning the corner, saw Tyson's house below them—so far below them that it had, as always, the look of a toy house on a toy meadow at the bottom of a green bowl. Below the house the little rivulet that rose beside it bisected the meadow, until at the end of the open ground it lost itself in the narrow wooded gorge, through which it sprang in unseen waterfalls to join the lake below.

They descended the slope to the house; sharp-eyed but saying little. A trifle to one side of the door, under a window, a dog was kenneled. It leapt out barking; but seeing so many persons it slunk in again and lay growling. A moment and the door was opened and Bess showed herself. She looked astonished, but not in any way frightened.

"Eh, masters!" she said. "What is it? Are you come after the young lady again?"

"Ay," Bishop answered. "We are. We want to know where you got the letter you gave Ann at the inn—to give to her?"

Perhaps Bess looked for the question and was prepared. At any rate, she betrayed no sign of confusion.

"Well," she said, "I can tell you what he was like that gave it me."

"A man gave it you?"

"Ay, and a shilling. And," smiling broadly, "he'd have given me something else if I'd let him."

"A kiss, I bet!" said Bishop.

"Ay, it was. But I said that'd be another shilling."

Clyne groaned.

"For God's sake," he said, "come to the point. "Time's everything."

Bishop shrugged his shoulders.

"Where did you see him, my girl?" he asked.

"By the gate of the coppice as I was bringing the milk," she answered frankly. "'I'm her Joe,' he said. 'And if you'll hand her this and keep mum, here's a shilling for you.' And——"

"Very good," said Bishop. "And what was he like?"

With much cunning she described Walterson, and Bishop acknowledged the likeness. "It's our man!" he said, slapping his boot with his loaded whip. "And now, my dear, which way did he go?"

But she explained that she had met him by the gate—he was a stranger—and she had left him in the same place.

"And you can't say which way he went?"

"No," she answered. "Nor yet which way he came. I looked back to see, to tell the truth," frankly. "But he had not moved, and he did not move until I was out of sight. And I never saw him again. The boy had not been stolen then," she continued, "and I thought little of it."

"You should have told," Bishop answered, eyeing her severely. "Another time, my lass, you'll get into trouble." And then suddenly, "Here, can we come in?"

She threw the door wide with a movement that disarmed suspicion.

"To be sure," she said. "And welcome, so as you don't make a noise to waken the mistress."

But when they stood in the kitchen it wore an aspect so neat and orderly that they were ashamed of their suspicions. The fire burned cheerfully on the wide hearth, and a wooden tray set roughly, but cleanly, stood on the corner of the long, polished table. The door of the shady dairy stood open, and afforded a glimpse of the great leaden milk-pans, and the row of shining pails.

"The mistress is just overhead," she said. "So you'll not make much noise, if you please."

"We'll make none," said Bishop. "We've learned what we want." And he turned to go out.

All had not entered. Those who had, nodded, turned with gloomy faces, and followed him out. The dog, lurking at the back of its kennel, was still growling.

"I'd be afeared to sleep here without him," Bess volunteered.

"Ay, ay."

"He's better'n two men."

"Ay?"

They looked at the dog, and some one bade her good-day. And one by one the little troop turned and trailed despondently from the house, Clyne with his chin sunk on his breast, Bishop in a brown study, the other men staring blankly before them. Half-way up the ascent to the road Clyne stopped and looked back. His face was troubled.

"I thought——" he began. And then he stopped and listened, frowning.

"What?"

"I don't know." He looked this way and that. "You didn't hear anything?"

Bishop and the men said that they had not heard anything. But they listened. They all listened. And still all said that they heard nothing.

"It was fancy, I suppose," Clyne muttered, passing his hand over his eyes. And he shook his head as if to shake off some painful impression.

But before he reached the road he paused once again and listened. And his face was haggard and lined with trouble.

It occurred to no one that Bess had been too civil. To no one. For shrewd Mrs. Gilson was not with them.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE SMUGGLERS' OVEN

HENRIETTA crouched beside the lamp, lulling the child from time to time with a murmured word. She held the boy, whom she had come to save, tight in her arms ; and the thought that she held him was bliss to her, though poisoned bliss. Whatever happened he would learn that she had reached the child. He would know—even if the worst came—what she had done for him. But the worst must not come. Were she once in the open under the stars, how quickly could she flee down the road with this light burden in her arms—down the road until she saw the star-sprinkled lake spread below her ! In twenty minutes, were she outside, she might be safe. In twenty minutes, only twenty minutes, she might place the child in his arms, she might read the joy in his eyes, and hear words—ah, so unlike those which she had heard from him !

There were only two doors between herself and freedom. Her heart beat at the thought. In twenty minutes how different it might be with her—in twenty minutes, were she at liberty !

She must wait until the child was sound asleep. Then when she could lay him down she would examine the place. The purity of the air proved that there was either a secret inlet for the purpose of ventilation, or that the door which shut off their prison from the well-head fitted ill and loosely. In the latter case it was possible that her strength might avail to force the door and make escape possible. They might not have given her credit for the vigour which she felt that she had it in her to show if the opportunity offered itself.

In the meantime she scrutinised, as she sat, every foot of the walls, without discovering anything to encourage hope or point to a second exit. The light of the dim lamp revealed only smooth courses of bricks, so near her eyes, so low upon her head, so bewildering in their regularity and number, that they appalled her the more the longer she gazed on them. It was to seek relief that she rose at last, and laying the sleeping child aside, went to the door and examined it.

Alas! it presented to the eye only solid wood, overlapping the aperture which it covered, and revealing in consequence neither hinges nor fastening. She set her shoulder against it, and thrust with all her might. But it neither bent nor moved, and in despair she left it, and stooping low worked her way round the walls. Her closest scrutiny revealed nothing; not a slit as wide as her slenderest finger, not a peg, nor a boss, nor anything that promised exit. She returned to the door, and made another and more desperate attempt to burst it. But her strength was unequal to the task, and to avoid a return of the old panic, which threatened to overcome her, she dropped down beside the child, and took him again in her arms, feeling that in the appeal which the boy's helplessness made to her she had her best shield against such terrors.

The next moment, with a flicker or two, the light went out. She was in darkness.

She fought with herself and with the impulse to shriek; and she conquered. She drew a deep breath as she sat, and with the unconscious child in her arms, stared motionless before her.

"They will come back," she murmured steadfastly; "they will come back! They will come back! And in the meantime I must be brave for the child's sake. I have only to wait! And they will come back!"

Nevertheless, it was hard to wait. It was hard not to let her thoughts run on the things which might prevent their return. They might be put to flight, they might be discovered and killed, they might be taken and refuse to say where she was. And then? Then?

But for the child's sake she must not, she would not, think

of that. She must dwell, instead, on the shortness of the time that had elapsed since they left her. She could not guess what the hour was, but she judged that it was something after midnight now, and that half of the dark hours were gone. Even so, she had long to wait before she could expect to be visited. She must have patience, therefore. Above all, she must not think of the mountain of earth above her, of the two thick doors that shut her off from the living world, of the vault that almost touched her head as she sat. For when she did the air seemed to fail her, and the grip of frenzied terror came near to raising her to her feet. Once on her feet and in that terror's grasp, she knew that she would rave and shriek, and beat on the walls—and go mad!

But she would not think of these things. She would sit quite still and hold the child more tightly to her, and be sensible. And be sensible! Above all, be sensible!

She thought of many things as she sat holding herself as it were; of her old home and her old life, the home and the life that seemed so far away, though no more than a few weeks divided her from them. But more particularly she thought of her folly and of the events of the last month; and of the child and of the child's father, and—with a shudder—of Walterson. How silly, how unutterably silly, she had been! And what stuff, what fustian she had mistaken for heroism; while, through all, the quiet restraint of the true master of men had been under her eyes.

Not that all the fault had been hers. She was sure of that even now. Anthony Clyne had known her as little as she had known him, and had misjudged her as largely. That he might know her better was her main desire now; and that he might know it, whatever the issue, she had an inspiration. She took from her neck the gold clasp which had aroused old Hinkson's greed, and she fastened it securely inside the child's dress. If the child were rescued, the presence of the brooch would prove that she had succeeded in her quest, and been with the boy.

After that she dozed off, and presently, strange to say, she slept. Fortunately, the child also was worn out; and the

two slept as soundly in the grim silence of the buried vault, with the load of earth above them and the water trickling from the well-hole beside them, as in the softest bed. They slept long, yet happily; when Henrietta at last awoke it was to immediate consciousness of the position and of the need of coolness. The boy had been first to rouse himself and was crying for a light, and for something to quench his thirst. A little milk remained in the can, and with infinite precaution she groped for the vessel and found it. The milk was sour, but the boy lapped it eagerly, and Henrietta wetted her lips, for she, too, was parched with thirst. She could have drunk ten times as much with pleasure, but she denied herself, and set the rest in a safe place. She did not know how long she had slept, and the fear that they might be left to meet a dreadful death would lift its head, hard as she strove to trample on it.

She gave the child a few spoonfuls of porridge and encouraged him to crawl about in the darkness. But after some restless, querulous moanings he slept again, and Henrietta was left to her thoughts, which continually grew more uneasy. She was hungry; and that seemed to prove that the morning was come and gone. If this were so were they to remain there all day? And if all day, all night? And all next day? And if so, if they were not discovered by next day, why not—forever?

Again she had to struggle against the hysterical terror that gripped and choked her. And resist it without action she could not. She rose, and in the dark felt her way to the hatchway by which she had entered. Again she passed her fingers down the smooth edges where it met the brickwork. She sought something, some bolt, some peg, some hinge—anything that, if it did not lead to freedom, might still hold her thoughts and give her occupation. But there was nothing! And when she had set her ear against the thick wood, still there was nothing. She turned from it, and went slowly and doggedly round the prison on her knees, feeling the brickwork here and there, and in very dearth of hope, searching with her fingers for that which had baffled her eyes. Round, and round again; with just a pause to listen and a stifled sob. But in vain. All, as she might have known, was toil in vain.

All was futile, hopeless. And then the child awoke, and she had to take him up and soothe him again and give him the last of the milk and the porridge. He seemed a little stronger and better. But she—she was growing frightened—horribly frightened. She must have been hours in that place ; and she was very near to that breakdown, which she had kept at bay so long.

For she had no more food. And, worse, with the sound of water almost in her ears, with the knowledge that it ran no more than a few feet from her in a clear and limpid stream, she had nothing more with which she could quench the boy's thirst or her own. And she had no light. That frantic struggle to free herself, that strength of despair which might, however improbably, have availed her, were and must be futile for her, fettered and maimed by a darkness that could be felt. She drew the child nearer and hugged him to her. He was her talisman, her all, the tie that bound her to sanity, the being outside herself for whom she was bound to think and plan and be cool.

She succeeded—for the moment. But as she sat, dozing a little at intervals, with the child pressed closely to her, she fell from time to time into fits of trembling. And she prayed for light—only for light ! And then again for some sound, some change in the cold, dead stillness that made her seem like a thing apart, aloof, removed from other things. And she was very thirsty. She knew that presently the child would grow thirsty again. And she would have nothing to give him.

The thought was torture, and she seemed to have borne it an age already ; supported by the fear of rousing the boy and hastening the moment she dreaded. She would have broken down, she must have broken down, but for one thought ; that, long as the hours seemed to her, and far distant as the moment of her entrance appeared, she might be a great way out in her reckoning of time. She might not have been shut up there so very long. The wretches who had put her there might not have fled. They might not have abandoned her. If she knew all she might be rid in an instant of her fears. All the time she might be torturing herself for nothing.

She clung passionately to that thought and to the child. But the prolonged uncertainty, the suspense, the waiting, tried her to the utmost of her endurance. Her ears ached with the pain of listening ; her senses hungered for the sound of the footstep on which all depended. Would that sound never come ? Once or twice she fancied that she heard it ; and mocked by hope she stilled the very beating of her heart, that she might hear more keenly. But nothing followed, nothing. Nothing happened, and her heart sickened.

" Presently," she thought, " I shall begin to see things. I shall grow weak and fancy things. The horror of being buried alive will master me, and I shall shriek and shout and go mad. But that shall not be until the child's trouble is over—God helping me ! "

And then, dazzling her with its brightness, a sudden thought flashed through her brain. Fool ! Fool ! She had succumbed in despair when a cry might release her ! She had laid herself down to die, when she had but to lift up her voice, and the odds were that she would be heard. Ay, and be freed ! For had not the girl threatened her with the man's coarse gallantries if she screamed ? And to what purpose, if she were buried so deep that her complaints could not be heard ?

The thought lifted a weight from her. It revived her hopes, almost her confidence. Immediately a current of vigour and courage coursed through her veins. But she did not shout at once. The child was asleep ; she would await his awakening, and in the meantime she would listen diligently. For if she could be heard by those who approached the place, it was possible that she could hear them.

She had barely conceived the thought, when the thing happened for which she had waited so long. The silence was broken. A sound struck her ear. A grating noise followed. Then a shaft of light, so faint that only eyes long used to utter darkness could detect it, darted in and lay across the brickwork of the vault. In a twinkling she was on her knees and scrambling with the child in her arms towards the hatch. She had reached it and was touching it, when the bolts that held

up the door slid clear, and with a sharp report the hatch fell. A burst of light poured in and blinded her. But what was sight to her? She, who had borne up against fear so bravely had now only one thought, only one idea in her mind—to escape from the vault. She tumbled out recklessly, fell against something, and only through the support of an unseen hand kept on her feet as she alighted in the well-head.

A man whom her haste had pushed aside, slapped her on the shoulder.

"Lord, you're in a hurry!" he said. "You've had enough of bed for once!"

"So would you," came the answer—in Bess's voice—"if you'd had twenty-four hours of it, my lad. All the same, she'll have to go back."

Trembling and dazed, Henrietta peered from one to the other. Mistress of herself two minutes before, she was now on the verge of hysteria, and controlled herself with an effort.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh! thank God you've come! Thank God you've come! I thought you had left me."

She was thankful—oh, she was thankful; though these were no rescuers, but the two who had consigned her to that horrible place. Bess raised the lanthorn so that its light fell on the girl's haggard, twitching face.

"We could not come before," she said, with something like pity in her tone. "That's all."

"All!" Henrietta gasped. "All! Oh, I thought you had left me! I thought you had left me!"

Bess considered her, and there was beyond doubt something like softening in the girl's dark face. But her tone remained ironical.

"You didn't," she said, "much fancy your bedroom, I guess?"

Henrietta's teeth chattered.

"Oh, God forgive you!" she cried. "I thought you had left me! I thought you'd left me!"

"It was your own folks' fault," Bess retorted. "They've never had their eyes off the blessed house, one or another of them, from dawn to dark! We could not come. But now

re's food, and plenty!" raising the light. "How's the ild?"

"Bad! Bad!" Henrietta muttered.

She was coming to her senses. She was beginning to derstand the position; to comprehend that no rescuers ere here, no search party had found her; and that—and at—had not one of them dropped a word about her going ck? Going back meant going back to that—place! With sudden gesture she thrust the food from her.

"Ain't you going to eat?" Bess asked, staring. "I ought you'd be famished."

"Not here! Not here!" she answered violently.

"Oh, nonsense!" the other rejoined. "Don't be a fool! ou're clemmed, I'll be bound. Eat while you can."

But, "Not here! Not here!" Henrietta replied. And e thrust the food away.

The man interposed.

"Stow it!" he said, in a threatening tone. "You eat hile you can and where you can!"

But she was desperate.

"I'll not eat here!" she cried. "I'll not eat here! And ll not go back!" her voice rising. "I will die before I will back. Do you hear?" with the fierceness of a wild reature at bay. "I do not care what you do! And the hild is dying. Another night—but I'll not suffer it! And you lay a finger on me"—repelling Bess, who had made a int of seizing her—"I will scream until I am heard! Ay, I ill!" she repeated, her eyes sparkling. "But take me to he house and I will go quietly! I will go quietly!"

It was plain that she was almost beside herself, and that ear of the place in which she had passed so many hours had riven out all other fear. The two, who had not left her so ong without misgiving, looked at one another and hesitated. They might overpower her. But the place was so closely atched that a single shriek might be heard; and they would e taken red-handed. Nor did Bess at least wish to use force. The position, and her views, were changed. All day curious yes had been fixed on the house, and inquisitive people had

started up where they were least expected. Bess's folly in bringing this hornets' nest about their ears had shaken her influence with the men; and the day had been one long exchange of savage recriminations. She owned to herself that she had done a foolish thing; that she had let her spite carry her too far. And in secret she was beginning to think how she could clear herself.

She did not despair of this; for she was crafty and of a good courage. She did not even think that it would be hard; but she must, as a *sine qua non*, conciliate the girl whom she had wronged. Unluckily she saw that she could not conciliate her without taking her to the house. And she could not with safety take her to the house. The men were irritated by the peril which she had brought upon them; they were ferocious and out of hand; and terribly suspicious. They blamed her, Bess, for all: they had threatened her. And if she was not safe among them, she was quite sure that Henrietta would not be safe.

There was an alternative. She might let the girl go there and then. And she would have done this, but she could not do it without Giles's consent; and she dared not propose it to him. He was wanted for other offences, and the safe return of Henrietta and the child would not clear him. He had looked on the child, and now looked on the girl, as pawns in his game, a *quid pro quo* with which—if he were taken while they remained in his friends' hands—he might buy his pardon. Bess, therefore, dared not propose to free Henrietta: and what was she to do if the girl were so foolish as to refuse to go back to the place where she was safe?

"Look here," she said at last. "You're safer here than in the house, if you will only take my word for it."

But there is no arguing with fear.

"I will not!" Henrietta persisted, with passion. "I will not! Take me out of this! Take me out! The child will die here, and I shall go mad—mad!"

"You're pretty mad now," the man retorted. But that said, he met Bess's eyes and nodded reluctantly. "Well," he said, "it's her own lookout. But I think she'll repent it."

"Will you go quiet?" Bess asked.

"Yes, yes!"

"And you'll not cry out? Nor try to break away?"

"I will not! I will not indeed!"

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"And by G—d," the man interposed bluntly, "she'd better keep to it."

"Very well," Bess said. "You have it your own way but I tell you truly, I put you in here for the best. And perhaps you'll know it before you're an hour older. However, all's said, and it's your own doing."

"Why don't you let me go?" Henrietta panted. "Let me go, and let me take the child!"

"Stow it!" the man cried, cutting her short. "It's likely, when we're as like as not to pay dear for taking you. Do you shut your talking-trap!"

"She'll be quiet," Bess said, more gently. "So douse the glim, lad. And do you give me the child," to Henrietta.

But she cried, "No! No!" and held it more closely to her.

"Very good! Then take my hand—you don't know the way. And not a whisper, mind! Slip the bolt, Giles! And, mum, all!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN TYSON'S KITCHEN

THE distance to the house was short. Before Henrietta had done more than taste the bliss of the open night, had done more than lift her eyes in thankfulness to the dark profundity above her, she was under the eaves. A stealthy tap was answered by the turning of a key, a door was quickly and silently opened, and she was pushed forward. Bess muttered a word or two—to a person unseen—and gripping her arm, thrust her along a passage. A second door gave way as mysteriously, and Henrietta found herself dazzled and blinking on the threshold of the kitchen which she had left twenty-four hours before. It was lighted, but not with the wastefulness and extravagance of the previous evening. Nor did it display those signs of disorder and riot which had yesterday opened her eyes.

She was sinking under the weight of the child, which she had hugged to her that it might not cry, and she went straight to the settle and laid the boy on it. He opened his eyes and looked vacantly before him ; but, apparently, he was too far gone in weakness, or in too much fear, to cry. While Henrietta, relieved of the weight, and perhaps of a portion of her fears, sank on the settle beside him, leant her face on her arms and burst into passionate weeping.

It was perhaps the best thing in her power. For the men had followed her into the kitchen ; and Lunt, with brutal oaths, was asking why she was there and what new folly was this. Bess turned on him—she well knew how to meet such attacks ; and with scornful tongue she bade him wait, calling him thick-head, and adding that he'd learn by-and-by, if he could learn anything. Then, while Giles, ill-content himself,

ave some kind of account of the thing, she began—as if it ere a trifle—to lay the supper. And almost by force she ot Henrietta to the table.

"It's food you want!" she said bluntly. "Don't play ne silly! Who's hurt you? Who's going to hurt you? ere, take a sip of this, and you'll feel better. Never heed im," with a contemptuous glance at Lunt. "He's most mes a grumbler."

For the moment Henrietta was quite broken, and the ressure which the other exerted was salutary. She did what ne was bidden, swallowing a mouthful of the Scotch cordial ess forced on her, and eating and drinking mechanically. leanwhile the three men had brought their heads together, nd were discussing the position with unconcealed grudging nd mistrust.

At length: "You've grown cursed kind of a sudden!" unt swore, scowling at the two women. The child, in the resence of the men, sat paralysed with terror. "What's his blamed fuss about?"

"What fuss?" Bess shot at him over her shoulder. And oing to the child she bent over it with a bowl of bread and milk.

"Why don't you lay 'em up in lavender?" the man neered. "See here, she was a peacock yesterday and you'd rind her pretty face under your heel! To-day—— What loes it mean? I want to know."

"I suppose you don't want 'em to die?" the girl returned, n the same tone of contempt.

"What do I care whether they die or live?"

"They'd be much use to us, dead!" she retorted.

Giles nodded assent.

"The girl's right there," he said in a low tone. "Best eave it to her. She's a cunning one and no mistake."

"Ay, cunning enough!" Lunt answered. "But whose game is she playing? Hers or ours?"

"Didn't know you had one!" Bess flung at him. And hen in an undertone, "Dolt!" she muttered.

"It's all one, man, it's all one!" Giles said. On the whole ne was for peace. "Best have supper, and talk it over after."

"And let the first that comes in through the door find her?" Lunt cried.

"Who's to come?"

"Didn't they come here this morning? And last night? And if she'd been here, or the child——"

"Ay, but they weren't!" Bess answered brusquely. "And that's the reason the coves won't come again. For the matter of that," turning fiercely on them, "who was it cleaned up after you, you dirty dogs, and put this place straight? Without which they'd have known as much the moment they put their noses in—as if the girl had been sitting on the settle there. Who was it thought of that, and did it? And hid you safe upstairs?"

"You did, Bess—you did!" the gipsy answered, speaking for the first time. "And a gay, clever wench you are!" He looked defiantly at Lunt. "You're a game cove," he said, "but you're not fly!"

Lunt for answer fired half a dozen oaths at him. But Giles interposed.

"We're all in one boat," he said. "And food's plenty. Let's stop jawing and to it!"

Two of the men seemed to think the advice good. And they began to eat, still debating. The third, Saul, continued to listen to his companions, but his sly eyes never left Henrietta, who sat a little farther down the table on the opposite side. She was not for some time aware of his looks, or of their meaning. But Bess, who knew his nature—he was her cousin—and who saw only what she had feared to see, frowned as she marked the direction of his glances. In the act of sitting down she paused, leant over the table, and with a quick movement swept off the Hollands bottle.

But the gipsy, with a grin, touched Lunt's elbow. And the ruffian seeing what she was doing, fell into a fresh fury and bade her put the bottle back again.

"I shall not," she said. "You've ale, and plenty. Do you want to be drunk if the girl's folks come?"

"Curse you!" he retorted. "Didn't you say a minute ago that they wouldn't come?"

Giles sided with him—for the first time.

"Ay, that's blowing hot and cold!" he said. "Put the in back, lass, and no two words about it."

She stood, darkly hesitating, as if she meant to refuse. But unt had risen, and it was clear that he would take no refusal hat was not backed by force. She replaced the Dutch bottle ullenly; and Giles drew it towards him and with a free hand ced his ale.

"There's naught like dog's nose," he said, "to comfort a an! The lass forgets that it's wintry weather and I've een out in it!"

"A dram's a dram, winter or summer!" Lunt growled. nd he followed the example.

Then Bess knew that she had lost the one ally on whom she ad counted. She could manage Giles sober. But drink as the man's weakness; and when he was drunk he was as rutal as his comrade; and more dangerous.

She had satisfied her grudge against Henrietta. And she as aware now, only too well aware, that she had let it carry er far. She had nothing to gain by further violence; and he had everything to lose by it. For if the girl were ill-reated, there would be no mercy for any of the party, if taken; hile escape, in the face of the extraordinary measures which llyne was taking and of the hostility of the countryside, was oubtful at the best. As she thought of these things and ate er supper with a sombre face, she wished with all her heart hat she had never seen the girl, and never, to satisfy a silly pite, decoyed her. Her one aim now was to get her out of he men's sight, and to shut her up where she might be safe ill morning. It was a pity, it was a thousand pities, that Henrietta had not stayed in the smugglers' oven! And Bess wondered if she could even now persuade her to return to it But a glance at Henrietta's haggard face, on which the last wenty-four hours had imprinted a stamp it would take many imes twenty-four hours to efface, warned her that advice—hort of the last extremity—would be useless. It only emained to remove the girl to a place where she might, with uck, lie safe and unmolested.

In this Henrietta might aid her, had she her wits about her. But Henrietta did not seem to be awake to the peril. The insolence of the gipsy's glances, which had yesterday brought the blood to her cheeks, passed unnoted, so complete was her collapse. Doubtless strength would return, nay, it was even now returning; and presently wit would return. For her nerves were young, and would quickly recover their tone. But for the moment, she was almost comatose. Having eaten and drunk, she sat heavily, with her elbow on the table, her head resting on her hand. The sleeve had fallen back from her wrist, and the gipsy lad's eyes rested long and freely on the white roundness of her arm. Her fair complexion seduced him as no dark beauty had power to seduce. He eyed her as the tiger eyes the fawn before it springs from covert. Bess, who read his looks as if they had been an open book, and who saw that Giles, her one dependence, was growing more sullen and dangerous with every draught, could have struck Henrietta for her fatuous stolidity.

One thing was clear. The longer she put off the move, the more dangerous the men were like to be. Bess never lacked resolution, and she was quick to take her part. As soon as she had eaten and drunk her fill, she rose and tapped Henrietta on the shoulder.

"We're best away," she said coolly. "Will you carry the brat upstairs, or shall I?"

For a moment she thought that she had carried her point. For no one spoke or objected. But when Henrietta rose and turned to the settle to take up the boy, the gipsy muttered something in Lunt's ear. The ruffian glared across at the girls and struck the haft of his knife with violence on the board.

"Upstairs?" he roared. "No, my girl, you don't! We keep together! We keep together! S'help me, if I don't think you mean to peach!"

"Don't be a fool," she answered. And she furtively touched Henrietta's arm, as a sign to her to be ready. Then to the gipsy lad, in a tone full of meaning, "The gentry mort," she said, in theives' patter, "is not worth the nubbing-cheat. I'm fly, and I'll not have it. Stow it, my lad, and don't be a flat!"

'And let you peach on us?" he answered, smiling.

Lunt struck the table.

"Stop your lingo!" he said. "Here, you!" to Giles. "Are you going to let these two sell us? The lass is on to peaching, that's my belief!"

"We'll—soon stop that," Giles replied, with a hiccough. "Here, I'll—I'll take one, and you—you t'other! And we'll have well stop their peaching, pretty dears!" He staggered to his feet as he spoke, his face inflamed with drink. "Peach, will they?" he muttered, swaying a little, and scowling at them over the dull, unsnuffed candles. "We'll stop that, and—and ha' some fun, too."

"S'help us if we don't!" cried Lunt, also rising to his feet. 'Let's live to-day, if we die to-morrow! You take one and I'll take the other!"

The gipsy lad grinned.

"Who's the flat now?" he chuckled. He alone remained seated, with his arms on the table. "You've raised your pipe too soon, my lass!"

"Stow this folly!" Bess answered, keeping a bold face. 'We're going upstairs," she continued. "Do you"—to Henrietta—"bring the child."

But, "Curse me if you do!" Giles answered. Drink had made him the more dangerous of the two. He lurched forward as he spoke, and placed himself between the girls and the foot of the open staircase that led to the upper floor. 'We're one apiece for you and one over! And you're going to stay, my girls, and amuse us!"

And he opened his arms, with a tipsy laugh.

If Henrietta had been slow to see the danger, she saw it now. And the shock was the greater. The men's flushed faces and vinous eyes, still more the dark face of the smiling gipsy who had raised the tempest for his own ends, filled her with fear. She clutched the child to her, but as much by instinct as from calculation; and she cast a desperate look around her—only to see that retreat was cut off. The girls were hemmed in on the hearth between the fire and the long table, and it was hard to say which of the men she most dreaded. She had gone

through much already and she cowered, white to the lips, behind her companion, who, for her part, looked greater confidence than she felt. But whatever Bess's fears, she rallied bravely to the occasion, being no stranger to such scenes.

" Well," she said, temporising, " we'll sit down a bit if you'll mind your manners. But we'll sit here, my lads, and together."

" No, one apiece," Giles hiccoughed, before she had finished speaking. " One apiece ! You come and sit by me—'twon't be the first time, my beauty ! And—and t'other one by him ! "

Bess stamped her foot in a rage.

" No ! " she cried, " I will not ! You'll just stay on your own side ! And we on ours ! "

" You'll just do as I say ! " the man answered, with tipsy obstinacy. " You'll just do—as I say ! "

And he lurched forward, thinking to take her by surprise and seize her.

Henrietta screamed, and recoiled to the farthest corner of the chimney nook. Bess stood her ground, but with a dark face thrust her hand into her bosom—probably for a knife. She never drew it, however, for before Giles could touch her, or Lunt, who was coasting about the long table to come at Henrietta, had compassed half the distance—there was a knock at the door.

It was a small thing, but it was enough. It checked the men as effectually as if it had been the knell of doom. They hung arrested, eye questioning eye ; or, in turn, tip-toeing to gain their weapons, they cast looks of menace at the women. And they listened with murder in their eyes.

" If you breathe a word," Giles hissed, " I'll throttle you ! "

And he raised his hand for silence. The knock was repeated.

" Some one must go," the gipsy lad muttered. His face was sallow with fear.

" Go ? " Bess answered, in a low tone, but one of fierce passion. " Who's to go but me ? See now where you'd be without me ! "

" And do you see here," Lunt made answer, and he drew a pistol from his pocket, and cocked it, " one word more than's

eedful, and I'll blow your brains out, my lass. If I go, you o first! So mark me, and speak 'em fair!"

And with a gesture he pointed to the dairy, and beckoned o the other men to retire thither.

He seemed to be about to command Henrietta to go with hem. But either he saw that she would disobey him in sheer error, or he thought her sufficiently hidden where she was. or when he had seen the other men out he followed them, and olding the door of the dairy half open showed Bess the pistol.

"Now," he said, "and by G—d, remember. For I'll keep ny word."

Bess had already, with a hasty hand, removed some of the lates and mugs from the table. She made sure that Henri- tta was hidden by the settle. Then she went to the door.

"Who's there?" she cried aloud.

No one answered, but the knock was repeated.

Henrietta raised her white face above the level of the settle. She listened; and hope, terrified as she was, rose in her heart. Who was likely to visit this lonely house at so late an hour? Was it not almost certain that her friends were there? And hat another minute would see her safe in their hands?

Lunt's dark face peering from the doorway of the dairy nswered that question. The muzzle of his weapon now covered her, now Bess. Sick at heart, almost fainting, she sank again behind the settle and prayed. While Bess with a noisy hand thrust back the great bar, and opened the door.

There was no inrush of feet, and Bess looked out.

"Well, who is it?" she asked of the darkness. "You're ate enough, whoever you are."

The entering draught blew the flames of the candles awry. Then a woman's voice was heard:

"I've come to ask how the missus is," it said.

"Oh, you have, have you? And a fine time this!" Bess scolded, with wonderful glibness. "She's neither better nor worse. So there! I hope you think it's worth your trouble!"

"And the baby? I heard it was dead."

"Then you heard a lie!"

The visitor, who was no other than Mrs. Tyson's old servant.

the stolid woman who had once admitted Henrietta to the house, seemed at a loss what to say next. After an awkward pause :

" Oh," she said, " well, I am glad. I was not sure you hadn't left her. And if she can't get out of her bed——"

" You thought there'd be pickings about ! " Bess cried, in her most insolent tone. " Well, there ain't, my girl ! And don't you come up again scaring us after dark, or you'll hear a bit more of my mind ! "

" You're not easy scared ! " the woman retorted contemptuously. " Don't tell me ! It takes more than the dark to frighten you ! "

" Anyway, nine o'clock is my hour for getting scared," Bess returned. " And as it's after that, and you've a dark walk back—— D'you come through the wood ? "

" Ay, I did."

" Then you'd best go back that way ! " Bess replied.

And she shut the door in the woman's face, and flung the bar over with a resounding bang.

And quickly, before the men, heaving sighs of relief, had had time to emerge from their retreat, she was across the floor, and had dragged Henrietta to her feet.

" Up the stairs ! " she whispered. " The door on the left ! Knock ! Knock ! I'll keep them back."

Taken by surprise as she was, Henrietta rose to the occasion. She bounded to the open stairs, and was half-way up before the men took in the position and understood that she was escaping them. They rushed forward then, falling over one another in their eagerness to seize her. But they were too late, Bess was before them. She sprang on to the widest of the lower steps where the staircase turned in the corner of the room, and flashing her knife in their eyes, she swore that she would blind the first man who ascended. They knew her, and for the moment fell back daunted and dismayed ; for Lunt had put up his pistol. He bethought himself, indeed, of pulling it out, when he found parley useless ; but it was then too late. By that time Bess's ear told her that Henrietta was safe in Mrs. Tyson's room, with the bolt shot behind her.

CHAPTER XXXV

THROUGH THE WOOD

BEHIND the closed door the two haggard-faced women looked at one another. Mrs. Tyson had not left her bed for many days. But she had heard the knocking at the outer door and the answering growl of the dog chained under her window; and hoping, yet scarcely daring to expect, that the nightmare was over and her husband or her friends were at hand, she had dragged herself from the bed and opened the room-door as soon as the knocking sounded at that.

For days, indeed, one strand, and one only, had held the feeble, frightened woman to life; and that strand was the babe that lay beside her. The sheep will fight for its lamb, the wren for its fledglings. And Mrs. Tyson, if she had not fought, had for the babe's sake borne and endured; and surrounded by the ruffians who had the house at their mercy, she had survived terrors that in other circumstances would have driven her mad.

True, Bess had not ill-treated her. On the contrary, she had been almost kind to her. And lonely and ill, dependent on her for everything, the woman had lost much of her dread of the girl; though now and again, in sheer wantonness, Bess would play with her fears. Certain that the weak-willed creature would not dare to tell what she knew, Bess had boasted to her of Henrietta's presence and her danger and her plight. When Henrietta, therefore, the moment the door was unfastened, flung herself into the room, and with frantic fingers helped to secure the door behind her, Mrs. Tyson was astonished indeed; but less astonished than alarmed. She was alarmed in truth, almost to swooning, and showed a face as white as paper.

Luckily, Henrietta had resumed the wit and courage of which stupor had deprived her for a time. She had no longer Bess at her elbow to bid her do this or that. But she had Bess's example and her own spirit. There was an instant of stricken silence, during which she and the woman looked fearfully into one another's faces by the light of the poor dip that burned beside the gloomy tester. Then Henrietta took her part. She laid down the child, to which she had clung through all; and with a strength which surprised herself, she dragged a chest, that stood a foot on one side of the opening, across the door. It would not withstand the men long, but it would check them. She looked doubtfully at the bed, but mistrusted her power to move it. Then, before she could do more, a sound reached them from an unexpected quarter, and struck at the root of her plans. For it came from the window; and so unexpectedly, that it flung them into one another's arms.

Mrs. Tyson screamed loudly. They clung to one another. "What is it? What is it?" Henrietta cried.

Then she saw a spectral face pressed against the dark casement. A hand tapped repeatedly on a pane.

Henrietta put Mrs. Tyson from her and approached the window. She discovered that the face was a woman's face; and with fumbling fingers she slid aside the catch that secured the window.

"Tell the missus not to be scared," whispered an anxious voice. "Tell her it's me! I got up the pear tree to see her, and I saw you. I knew that Bess was lying, and I thought I'd—I thought I'd just get up and see for myself!"

"Thank God!" Henrietta cried, clinging to the sill in a passion of relief as she recognised the stolid-faced servant. "You know me?"

"You're the young lady that's missing?" the woman answered, taking a securer hold of the window-frame, and bringing her head into the room. "I know you. I was thinking if I dared scare the missus, when I see you tumble in—I nigh tumbled down with surprise! I'll go hot-foot and take the news, miss!"

"No, no! I shall come!"

"You let me go and fetch 'em! I'll bet, miss, I'll be welcome. And do you bide quiet and safe. Now we know where you are, they'll not harm you."

But Henrietta had heard a footstep on the stairs, and she was not going to bide quiet. She had no belief in her safety.

"No," she said resolutely. "I am coming. Can you take the child?"

"Well, if you must, but——"

"I must! I must!"

"Lord, you are frightened!" the woman muttered, looking at her face. And then, catching the infection, "Is't as bad as that?" she said. "Ay, give me the child, then. And for the Lord's sake, be quick, miss. This pear is as good as a ladder, and the dog knows me as well as its own folk!"

"The child! The child!" Henrietta repeated. Again her ear had caught the sound of shuffling feet, and of whispering on the stairs. She carried the child, which seemed paralysed by fear, to the sill, and delivered it into the other's arm.

The sill of the window was barely ten feet from the ground, and an old pear-tree, spread-eagled against the wall, formed a natural ladder. The dog, which had been chained under the window to guard against egress, knew the woman and did no more than stand below and wag its tail. In two minutes Henrietta was safe on the ground, had taken the child from the other's arms, and was ready for flight.

But the servant would not leave until she had made sure that her mistress had strength to close the window. That done, she turned to Henrietta.

"Now come!" she said. "And don't spare yourself, miss, for if they catch us after this they'll for certain cut our throats!"

Henrietta had no need of the spur, and at their best pace the two fled down the paddock, the servant-wench holding Henrietta by the elbow and impelling her. The moon had risen, and Mrs. Tyson, poor, terrified, trembling woman, watched them from the window. She could follow them

down the pale meadow, and even discern the dark line of the rivulet, along the bank of which they passed, and here and there a patch of higher herbage, or a solitary boulder left in the middle of the turf for a scratching-post. Perhaps she made, in leaning forward, some noise which irritated the dog ; or perhaps the moonlight annoyed it. At any rate, it began to bay.

By that time, however, Henrietta and her companion had gained the shadow of the trees at the upper end of the wooded gorge through which the stream escaped. They stood there a brief while to take breath, and the woman offered to carry the child. But Henrietta, though she felt that her strength was uncertain, though she experienced an odd giddiness, was unwilling to resign her charge. And after a pause they started to descend the winding path which followed the stream, and often crossed and re-crossed it.

They stumbled along as fast as they could. But this was not very fast. For not only was it dark in the covert, but the track was beset with projecting roots, and overhead branches hung low and scraped their faces. More than once startled by a rabbit, or the gurgle of the falling water, they stopped to listen, fancying that they were pursued. Still they went fast enough to feel ultimate safety certain ; and Henrietta, as she held an end of the other's petticoat between her fingers and followed patiently, bade herself bear up a little longer and it would be over. It would soon be over, and she—she would put his child in his arms. It would soon be over, and she would be able to sink down upon her bed and rest. For she was very weary—and odd. Very, unaccountably weary. When she stumbled or her foot found the descent longer than she expected, she staggered and swayed on her feet.

But, " We shall soon be safe ! We shall soon be safe ! " she told herself. " And the child ! "

Meanwhile they had passed the darkest part of the little ravine. They had passed the place where the waterfalls made the descent most arduous. They could even see below them a piece of the road lying white in the moonlight.

On a sudden Henrietta stopped.

"You must take the child," she faltered, in a tone that startled her companion. "I can't carry—it any farther."

"I'll take it. You should have given it me before!" the woman scolded. "That's better. Quiet, my lad. I'll not hurt you!" For the child, silent hitherto, had begun to whimper. "Now, miss," she continued sharply, "bear up! It's but a little way farther."

"I don't think—I can," Henrietta said. The crisis over, she felt her strength ebbing away in the strangest fashion. She swayed, and had to cling to a tree for support. "You must go on—without me," she stammered.

"I'll not go on without you," the woman answered. She was loath to leave the girl helpless in the wood, where it was possible that she might come to harm. "You come down to the road, miss. Pluck up! Pluck up! It's but a step!"

And partly by words, partly by means of a vigorous arm, the good creature got the girl to the bottom of the wood, and by a last effort, half lifted, half dragged her over the stile which closed the gap in the wall. But once in the road, Henrietta seemed scarcely conscious where she was. She tottered, and the moment the woman took her hands from her, she sank down against the wall.

"Leave me! Leave me!" she muttered, with a last exertion of sense. "And take the child! I'm—giddy. Only giddy! I shall be better in a minute." Then, "I think—I think I am fainting."

"I think you are," the woman answered drily. She stooped over her. "Poor thing!" she said. "There's no knowing what has happened to her! But she'll freeze as she is!"

And whipping off her thick drugget shawl—they made such shawls in Kendal—she wrapped it about the girl, snatched up the child, and set off running and walking along the road. The Low Wood Inn lay not more than four furlongs away, and she counted on returning in twenty minutes.

"Ay, in twenty minutes!" she muttered, and then, saving her breath, she kept on steadily along the moonlit road, soothing the child with a word when it was necessary. In a very brief time she was out of sight.

For a while all about the foot of the wood was still as death. Then favoured by the recumbent position, Henrietta began to recover ; and presently, but not until some minutes had elapsed, she came to herself.

She sighed deeply, and gazing upward at the dark sky, with its twinkling stars, she wondered how she came to be in such a strange place ; but without any desire to rise, or any wish to solve the riddle. A second sigh as deep as the first lifted the oppression from her breast ; and with returning strength she wondered what was the long dark line that bounded her vision. Was it, could it be, the head-board of her bed ? Or the tester ?

It was, in fact, the wall that bounded the wood, but she was not able to take that in. And though the nipping air, blowing freely on her face, was doing its best to refresh her, and she was beginning to grope in her memory for the past, it needed a sound, a voice, to restore to her, not her powers, but her consciousness. The event soon happened. Two men drew near, talking in low fierce tones. At first, lying there as in a dream, she heard without understanding ; and then, still powerless under the spell, she heard and understood.

" Why didn't you," Lunt's voice growled hoarsely, " loose the dog, as I told you ? We'd have had her by now."

" Ay, and have had the country about our ears, too," Giles answered angrily.

" And shan't we have it about our ears when that vixen has told her tale ? " the other cried. " I swear my neck aches now ! "

" She couldn't carry the brat far, nor fast."

" No, but—what's that ? " There was alarm in Lunt's tone.

" Only the lad following us," Giles answered. " He's brought the lanthorn."

Perhaps the three separated then : perhaps not. She could not rise to see. She was paralysed. She lay as in a nightmare, and was conscious only of the yellow gleam of the lanthorn as the men quartered the ground this way and that, and came nearer and nearer. At last the man who carried

The light was close to her, but on the other side of the wall. He raised the lanthorn above his head, and looked over the wall. By evil chance, the light focussed itself upon her.

She knew then that she was discovered. And her terror was the greater because she knew that the man who held the lanthorn was the gipsy—whom she feared the most of all. But she was not capable of motion or of resistance; and though he held the light steadily on her, and for a few seconds she saw in the side-glow his dark features gleaming down at her, she lay fascinated. She waited for him to proclaim his discovery.

He shut off the light abruptly.

"So—ho! back!" he cried. "She's not this way! Maybe she's in the bushes above!"

"This way?" asked one of the other men.

"Ay!"

"Then, burn you, why don't you bring the light, instead of talking?" Lunt retorted. And from the sound he appeared to be kicking the nearer bushes, and probing them with a stick.

The gipsy answered impudently, and the three, blaming one another, moved off up the wood.

"You should have brought the dog," one cried.

"Oh, curse the dog!" was the answer. "I tell you she can't be far off! She can't have come as low as this." The light was thrown hither and thither. "She's somewhere among the bushes. We'll hap on her by-and-by."

"And s'help me when we do," Lunt answered. "I'll——"

And then, mercifully, the voices grew indistinct. The flicker of the lanthorn was lost among the trees. With wonder and stupefaction Henrietta found herself alone, found herself faint, gasping, scarcely sensible—but safe! Safe!

She could not understand the why or the wherefore of her escape; and she had not energy to try to fathom it. She lay a few seconds to rest and clear her head, and then she thought that she would try to rise. She was on her knees, and was supporting herself with one hand against the cold, rough surface of the wall, when every fibre in her cried suddenly, Alarm! Alarm!

He was coming back. Yes, he was coming back, leaping and running, bursting his way through the undergrowth. And she understood. He had led the others away and he was coming back—alone !

She fell back feeling deadly faint. Then she tried to rise, but she could not, and she screamed. She screamed hoarsely once and again, and, oh, joy ! even as the gipsy clambered over the stile, sprang into the road and came towards her, even as all her being arose in revolt against him, a voice answered her, feet came racing up the road, a man appeared, she was no longer alone.

It was the chaplain, panting and horrified. He had been the first to hear the woman's tale, the first to take the alarm ; and running out of the house unarmed and hatless he had come in time, in the nick of time ! Across her lifeless body, for at last she had swooned quite away, the gipsy and he looked at one another by the light of the moon. Then without warning, without a word, the gipsy came at him like a wildcat, a knife in his hand.

Sutton saw the gleam of the weapon, and the gleam of the man's savage eyes, but he held his ground—held it gallantly. With a yell for help he let the man close with him, and, more by luck than skill, he parried the blow which the other dealt him with the knife. But the gipsy, finding his arm clutched and held, changed his tactics, and lifting his left hand, struck his enemy with all his force a blow between the eyes. The poor chaplain fell stunned and breathless.

The gipsy stood over him an instant to see if he would rise. But he did not move ; and the man turned to the girl, who lay insensible beside the wall. He stooped to raise her, with the intention of putting her over the wall. But in the act he heard a shout, and he lifted his head to listen, supposing that his comrades had got wind of the skirmish.

It was not his comrades ; for despairing of retaking the girl, they had hurried back to the house to attend to their own safety. And he stooped again. But this time he heard the patter of footsteps coming up the road, and a man came in sight in the moonlight. With every passion roused, and

determined, since he had risked so much, that he would not be balked, the gipsy lifted the girl none the less, and had raised her almost to the level of the top of the wall, when the man shouted anew. Perforce the ruffian let the girl down again, and with a snarl of rage turned and faced the newcomer with his knife.

But Clyne—for it was he—had not come unarmed. For many days he had not gone so much as a step without arms. And the stranger's attitude as he let the girl fall, and the gleam of his knife, were enough. The man rushed at him, as he had rushed at the chaplain, with the ferocity of a wild beast. But Clyne met him with a burst of flame and lead, and then with a second shot; and the gipsy whirled round with a muffled cry and fell—at first it seemed backwards. But when he reached the ground he lay limp and doubled up with his face to his knees, and one arm under him.

Clyne, with the smoking pistol in his hand, bent over him, ready, if he moved, to beat out his brains. But there was no need of that third blow, which he would have given with hearty good-will. And he turned to the girl. Something, perhaps the pistol-shot, had brought her to herself. She had raised herself against the wall, and holding it, was looking wildly about her; not at the dead man, nor at the chaplain, who stirred and groaned. But at Clyne. And when he approached her she threw herself on his breast and clung to him.

"Oh, don't let me go! Oh, don't let me go!" she cried.

He tried to soothe her, he tried to pacify her; keeping himself between her and the prostrate men.

"I won't," he said. "I won't. You are quite safe. You are quite safe."

He had fired with a hand as steady as a rock, but his voice shook now.

"Oh, don't let me go!" she repeated hysterically "Oh, don't let me go!"

"You are safe! you are safe!" he assured her, holding her more closely, and yet more closely to him.

And when Bishop and Long Tom Gilson, and three or four

others, came up at a run, breathing fire and slaughter, he was still supporting her; and she was crying to him, in a voice that went to the men's hearts, "Not to let her go! Not to let her go!"

Alas, too, that was the sight which met the poor chaplain's swimming gaze, when he came to himself, and, groaning, felt the bump between his eyes—the bump which he had got in her defence.

CHAPTER XXXVI

TWO OF A RACE

IT was Thursday, and three days had passed since the Sunday, the day of many happenings, which had cleared up the mystery and restored Henrietta to Mrs. Gilson's care. The frost still held, the air was brisk and clear. The Langdale Pikes lifted themselves sharp and glittering from the line of grey screes that run southward to Wetherlamb and the Coniston Mountain. A light air blew down the lake, ruffling the open water, and bedecking the leafless woods on Wray Point with a fringe of white breakers. The morning was a perfect winter morning, the sky of that cloudless, but not over-deep blue, which portends a long and steady frost. Horses' hoofs rang loud on the road; and rooks gathered where they had passed. Men who stopped to talk hit their palms together or swung their arms. The larger and wiser birds had started betimes for salt water and the mussel preserves on the Cartmel Sands.

The inquest on the gipsy had been held, but something perfunctorily, after the fashion of the day. Captain Clyne and the chaplain had told their stories, and after a few words from the coroner, a verdict of justifiable homicide had been heartily given, and the jury had resolved itself into a "free and easy" in the tap-room; while the coroner had delivered himself of much wisdom, and laid down much law in Mrs. Gilson's snuggery.

Henrietta had not been made to appear; for carried upstairs, in a state as like death as life, on Sunday evening, she had kept her room until this morning. She would fain have kept it longer, but there were reasons against that. And now,

with the timidity which a retreat from every-day life breeds—and perhaps with some flutterings of the heart on another account—she was pausing before her looking-glass, and trying to gather courage to descend and face the world.

She was still pale ; and when she met her own eyes in the mirror, a quivering smile, a something verging on the piteous in her face, told of nerves which time had not yet steadied. Possibly, her reluctance to go down, though the hour was late, and Mrs. Gilson would scold, had a like origin. None the less, she conquered it after a time, opened her door and descended, as she had done on that morning of her arrival, a few weeks back, and yet—oh, such a long time back !

Now, as then, when she had threaded the dark passages and came to the door of Mr. Rogers's room, she paused faint-hearted, and, with her hand raised to the latch, listened. She heard no sound, and she opened the door and went in. The table was laid for one.

She heaved a sigh of relief, and—cut it short midway. For the room was not empty. Captain Clyne came forward from one of the windows at which he had been standing.

" I am glad that you are better," he said stiffly, and in a constrained tone, " and able to come down."

" Oh yes, thank you," she answered, striving to speak heartily, and repressing with difficulty the inclination of her lip to quiver. " I think I am quite well now. Quite well ! I am sure, after this long time, I should be."

And she turned away and affected to warm her hands at the fire.

He did not look directly at her—he avoided doing so. But he could see the reflection of her face in the oval-framed mirror, as she stood upright again. He saw that she had lost for the time the creamy warmth of complexion that was one of her chief beauties. She was pale and thin, and looked ill.

" You have been very severely shaken," he said. " No doubt you feel it still ! "

" Yes," she answered, " a little. I think I do."

" Perhaps you had better be alone ? "

She did not know what to say to that. Perhaps she did

not know what she wished. Her lip quivered. This was unlike what she had expected and what she had dreaded. But it was worse. He seemed to be waiting for her answer—that he might go. What could she say ?

" Just as you like," she murmured at last.

" Oh, but I wish to do what you like ! " he replied, with a little more warmth ; yet awkwardly and with constraint.

" So do I," she replied.

" I shall stay, then," he answered. And he lifted a small dish from the hearth and carried it to the table. " I had Mrs. Gilson's orders to keep this hot for you," he said.

" It was very kind of you."

" I am afraid," more lightly, " that it was fear of Mrs. Gilson weighed on me as much as anything."

He returned to the hearth when he had seen her seated. And she began her breakfast with her eyes on the table. With the first draught of coffee a feeling of warmth and courage ran through her ; and he, standing with his elbow on the mantelpiece and his eyes on the mirror, saw the change in her face.

" The boy is better," he said suddenly. " I think he will do now."

" Yes ? "

" I think so. But he will need great care. He will not be able to leave his bed for a day or two. We found your brooch pinned inside his clothes."

" Yes ? "

He turned sharply and for the first time looked directly at her.

" Of course, we knew why you put it there. It was good of you. But why—don't you ask after him, Henrietta ? " he continued in a different tone.

She felt the colour rise to her cheeks—and she wished it anywhere else.

" I saw him this morning," she murmured.

" Oh ! " there was surprise in his tone. And he turned to the mirror again. " I see."

She began to wish that he would leave her, for his silent watching made her horribly nervous. And she dared not start a subject herself, because she could not trust her voice. The

hands of the white-faced clock jerked slowly on, marking the seconds, and accentuating the silence. She grew so nervous at last that she could not lift her eyes from her plate, and she ate though she was scarcely able to swallow, because she dared not leave off.

It did not occur to her that Anthony Clyne was as ill at ease as she was; and oppressed to a much greater degree by the memory of certain scenes which had taken place in that room. Her nervousness was in part the reflection of his constraint. And his constraint arose from two feelings widely different.

The long silence was becoming painful to both, when he forced himself to break it.

"I am so very, very deeply beholden to you," he said, in a constrained tone, "that—that I must ask you, Henrietta, to listen to me for a few minutes—even if it be unpleasant to you."

She laughed awkwardly.

"If it is only," she answered, "because you are beholden to me—that—that you feel it necessary to thank me at length, please don't. You will only overwhelm me."

"It is not for that reason only," he said. And he knew that he spoke, much against his will, with dreadful solemnity. "No. Naturally we must have much to say to one another I, in particular, who owe to you——"

"Please let that be," she protested.

"But I cannot. I cannot!" he repeated. "You have done me so great a service, at a risk so great, and under circumstances so—so——"

"So remarkable," she cried, with something of her old girlish manner, "that you cannot find words in which to describe them! Then please don't." And then, more seriously: "I did not do what I did to be thanked."

"Then why?" he asked quickly. "Why did you do it?"

"Did you think," she protested, her head high, "that I did it to be thanked?"

"No, but—why did you do it, Henrietta?" he asked persistently. "Such a risk, such men, such circumstances, might have deterred any woman. Nay, almost any man."

She toyed with her teaspoon ; there had come a faint flush of colour into her cheeks.

" I think it was—I think it was just to reinstate myself," she murmured.

" You mean ? "

" You gave me to understand," she continued, " that you thought ill of me. And I wished you to think well of me ; or better of me, I should say, for I did not expect you to think quite well of me after—you know ! " in some confusion.

" You wished to regain the old position ? "

" Yes."

" I wonder," he said slowly, " how much you mean by that ? "

" I mean what I say," she answered, looking at him.

" Yes, but do you mean that you—wish to regain it altogether ? "

She did not remove her eyes from his face, but she blushed to the roots of her hair.

" I am not sure that I understand," she said with a slight air of offence.

" No ? " he said. " And perhaps I did not quite mean that. What I did mean, and do mean, what I am hoping, what I am looking forward to, Henrietta——" and there he broke off.

He seemed to find it necessary to begin again :

" Perhaps I had better explain," he said more soberly. " You told me that morning by the lake some home-truths, you remember ? You showed me that what had happened was not all your fault ; was perhaps not at all your fault. And you showed me this with so much energy and power, that I went away with the first clear impression of you I had had in my life. Yes, with the feeling that I had never known you until then. He dropped his eyes, and looked thoughtfully at something on the table. " And one of the things I remember best, and which I shall always remember, was your saying that I had never paid any court to you."

" It was true," she said, in a low voice.

And she too did not look at him, but kept her eyes bent on the spoon with which she toyed.

" Yes. Well, if you will let the old state of things be so far

reinstated as to—let me begin to pay my court to you now, I am not confident, I am very far from confident, that I can please you. I am rather old, for one thing "—with a rueful laugh—" to make love gracefully, and rather stiff and—political. But owing to the trouble I have brought upon you in the past——"

" I never said but that we both brought it ! " Henrietta objected suddenly.

" Well, whoever brought it——"

" We both brought it ! " she repeated obstinately.

" Very well. I mean only that the trouble——"

" Makes it unlikely that I shall find another man willing to marry me ? " she said. " Pray be frank with me ! That," rising and going to the window, and then turning to confront him, " is what you mean, is it not ? That is exactly what you mean, I am sure ? "

" Something of that kind, perhaps," he admitted.

" But you forget Mr. Sutton ! " she said—and paused. She took one step forward, and her eyes shone. " You forget Mr. Sutton, Captain Clyne. The gentleman to whom you handed me over ! To whom you gave so clear a certainty that I was for the first comer who was willing. He is willing, quite willing ! "

" But——"

" And it cannot be said that he did not behave gallantly on Sunday night ! I am told——"

" He behaved admirably."

" And he is willing ! " she flung the word at him—" quite willing to marry me—disgraced as I am ! As you have always, always hinted I am ! And not out of pity, Captain Clyne. Let us be frank with one another. You were very frank with me once—more than frank." She held out her wrist, which was still faintly discoloured. " When a man does that to a woman," she said, " she either loves him, sir, or hates him."

" Yes," he said slowly—very slowly. " I see. Your mind is made up, then——"

" That I will not accept your kind offer to—pay your court

o me ?" she answered, with derision. "Certainly. I have o mind to be wooed by you!" Again she held out her rrist. "You know the stale proverb: 'He that will not hen he may, when he will he shall have nay!'" And she nade him a little bow, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks bright.

He turned his back on her, and stood for a moment looking rom the window which was the nearer to the fire—the one ooking over the lake. The words of her proverb—stale nough in truth—ran very sorrowfully in his ears. "He that vill not when he may! He that will not when he may!" No, he might have known that she was not one to forget. He night have known that the words he had said, and the things hat he had done, would rankle. And that she who had not nesitated to elope—to punish him for his neglect of her—would not hesitate to punish him for worse than neglect. He stood a long minute watching the tiny waves burst into white lines at the foot of Hayes Woods. No, she could not forget—nor forgive. But she could act, she had acted, as if she had done both. She had saved his child. She had risked her life for it. And if she had done that with this resentment, this feeling in her heart, if she had done it, moved only by the desire to show him that he had misjudged her—in a sense it was the nobler act, and one like—ay, he owned it sorrowfully—like herself! At any rate, it did not become him to cast a word of reproach at her. She had saved his child.

He turned at length, and looked at her. He saw that her figure had lost its elation, and her cheeks their colour. She was leaning against the side of the window, and looked tired and ill, and almost as she had looked when she came into the room. His heart melted.

"I would like you to know one thing,' he said, "before I go. Your triumph is greater, Henrietta, than you think your revenge more complete. It is no question of pity with me, but of love." He paused, and laughed awry. "The worse for me, you will say, and the better for you. *Vae victis!* Still, even if you hate me——"

"I did not say that I hated you!"

"You said——"

"I did not! I did not!" she repeated, with a queer little laugh. And she sat down on the window seat, and turned quickly with a pettish movement, so that he could only see the side of her face. "I said nothing of the kind."

"But——"

"I said something very different!"

"You said——"

"I said that when a man pinches a girl's wrist black and blue, and swears at her—yes, Captain Clyne," firmly, "you swore at me, and called me——"

"Don't!" he said.

"I only said," she continued breathlessly, "that when a man does that, the woman either loves him or hates him!"

"Henrietta!"

"Captain Clyne!"

After a long pause, "I think I understand you," he said slowly, "but if you—if there were any feeling, the least feeling of that kind on your part, you would not have forbidden me to—to think of seeking you for my wife."

"I didn't!" she answered. "I told you that you should not pay your court to me. And you shall not! You cannot," half laughing and half crying, "woo what's won, can you? If you still think it is worth the winning! Only," stopping him by a gesture as he came towards her, "you are not to give me over to Mr. Sutton again, whatever I do! You must promise me that."

"I won't!" he said.

"You are quite sure, sir? However I behave? And even if I run away from you?"

"Quite sure!"

And a few minutes later, "Poor Sutton!" he said. "We must try to make it up to him."

She laughed.

"It is a good thing you did not set out to woo me," she answered. "For you would not have shone in that *rôle*. Make it up to him indeed! Make it up to him! What a thing, sir, to say to—me!"

* * * * * *

It was not made up to Mr. Sutton; though the best living that could be procured by an exchange with the Bishop of Durham—and there were fat livings in Durham in those days, and small blame if a man held two of them—was found for the chaplain. He married, too, a lady of the decayed house of Conyers of Sockburn, beside which the Damers and the Clynes were upstarts. And so both in his fortune and his wife's family he did as well—almost—as he had hoped to do. But though he accepted his patron's gift, he came seldom to Clyne Old Hall; and some held him ungrateful. Moreover, a little later, when to be a radical was not counted quite so dreadful a thing, he turned radical, in all but the white hat. And Clyne was disappointed, but not suprised. Henrietta, however, understood. Though children running about her knees had tamed her wildness and caged her pride, she was still a woman, and the memory of a past conquest was not ungrateful. She had no desire to see the pale replica of Mr. Pitt, but she sometimes thought of him, and always kindly and with gratitude.

There was a third lover, of whom she never thought without unhappiness.

"You will never tell the children? You will never tell the children?" was her prayer to her husband when Walterson was in question.

And though he answered with gravity, "Not unless you do it again, my dear," the sting of remembrance did not cease to rankle.

Walterson was traced to Leith—and thence to Holland. There the trail was lost, and it is believed that he did not live to return to England. Whether he did return or not—and Bow Street, and Mr. Bishop in particular, kept watch for him long—he never re-entered Henrietta's life. As the memory of the French Revolution faded from men's minds, the struggle for reform fell into more reputable and less violent hands. Silly and turbulent men of the type of him who had turned the girl's young head no longer counted; or, rising to the top at moments of public excitement, vanished as quickly, and no man knew whither.

Giles and Lunt were not taken on that Sunday night. They escaped, it was supposed, to Scotland, by way of Patterdale and the Moors. Less fortunate, however, than Walterson, they returned a year later to London and fell in again with Thistlewood. Yielding to the fascination of that remarkable and unhappy man, they took part in his schemes, and were taken with him in the loft over the stable in Cato Street, when the attempt to murder the Cabinet at Lord Harrowby's house in Grosvenor Square miscarried. He and they got a fair trial, but little pity. And it is not to be supposed that upon the scaffold in the Old Bailey, they thought much of the lonely house in the hollow at Troutbeck, or of the helpless woman whom they had terrorised. To their credit, be it said, they died more worthily than they had lived ; and with them came to a close the movement which sought to reach reform by the road of violence, and to that end held no instruments too cheap or vile.

Tyson came out of the adventure a wiser and perhaps a better man. For on his return from the north he found it hard to free himself from the charge of complicity in the acts of those who had used his house ; nor did he succeed until he had lain some weeks in Appleby gaol. He would fain have avenged himself on Bess, but for reasons to be stated, he could not enjoy this satisfaction. And his neighbours sent him to Coventry. Had he been a strong man he might have defied them and public opinion. But he was only a braggart, and that which must have embittered many, tamed him. He turned to his wife for comfort, sought his home more than before, and gradually settled down into a tolerable citizen and a high Tory.

Bess saved herself by her own wit and courage. The Monday's light saw her dragged to Kendal prison, where they were not so gentle with her as they had been with Henrietta. Her story went with her, and, " They say you stole a child," the little girl murmured, standing at her knee and staring at her, " and 'll be hanged at the March fair."

" Not I," said Bess. " It's almost a pity, too, ain't it ? There'd be a fine crowd to see ! "

The child's eyes sparkled.

"Yes," she said. "There'd be a crowd, too."

But Bess played a fine stroke. She sent for her rival on the Friday, and Henrietta, twenty-four hours betrothed, and very far from unhappy, took that road once more, and went to her.

"I saved you," said Bess, with coolness. "Yes, I did. Don't deny it! Now do you save me."

And Henrietta moved heaven and earth and Anthony Clyne to save her. She succeeded. Bess went abroad—to join Walterson, it was rumoured. If so, she returned without him, for on the old miser's death she appeared on Windermere, sold Starvecrow Farm and all its belongings, and removed to the south, but to what part is not known, nor are any particulars of her later fortunes within reach. Some said that she played a part in the great riots at Bristol twelve years later, but the evidence is inconclusive, and dark women possessing a strain of gipsy blood are not uncommon.

Nor are women with a sharp tongue and a warm heart. Yet when Mrs. Gilson died in the year of those very riots, and at a good age, there was a gathering to bury her in Troutbeck graveyard as great as if she had been a Lowther. The procession, horse and foot, was a mile long. And when those who knew her least wondered whence all these moist eyes and this flocking to do honour to a woman who had been quick of temper and rough of tongue—ay, and spared nobody, were it Squire Bolton of Storrs, or the rich Mr. Rogers himself—there was one who came a great distance to the burying who could have solved the riddle.

It was Henrietta.

THE END

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